

Vatican's sorry role in recent Cuban history

JONATHAN STEELE correctly notes that it has been the Cuban president, Fidel Castro, rather than the Pope of the day, who has consistently sought to build bridges between Cuba's Catholics and the Vatican (Cuba prepares for a clash of the titans, January 4). The problem for the Vatican has been that the conditions for such a relationship must respect Cuba's independence and sovereignty. With widespread support of the Cuban people, President Castro has ensured no interference by a religious bureaucracy that has too often permitted "freedom" of religion to be accompanied by oppression of, and inequality for, its followers.

The vast majority of Cuban people are well aware of a Church establishment that has — over the course of Cuba's history — sanctioned, if not actively supported, genocide of its indigenous population, an active African slave trade in Havana's marketplace, the exploitation of Cubans under the United States-backed Batista dictatorship, and opposition to the national revolution since 1959.

It is hardly an indictment of the Cuban administration if the Vatican chose to respond to abolition of Church interference in the state by isolating its own members (for example, by refusing his Castro's invitation to the Pope to visit Cuba while he was in Latin America in 1979).

It is indeed ironic, but perhaps unsurprising, that recent liberalisation in Cuba have resulted in a growth in adherents of conservative Protestant evangelical denominations, more so than in the Catholic Church: perhaps a factor in the Pope's decision to visit the island. Nevertheless, for whatever reason,

the obvious thaw between Havana and the Vatican is certainly welcome, and Pope John Paul II is to be congratulated for taking a major step in improving those relations. He is likely to be an better received in Havana in 1998 than he was in newly liberated Saudi Arabia in 1979 (and, probably, would have been in Havana, had he visited at that time).

Hopefully, he will reiterate his opposition to the evils of the US blockade of Cuba, while acknowledging the achievements of the Cuban revolution. In this post-cold war period, the Pope seems to have greater freedom to acknowledge the failings of capitalist practice and the virtues of socialist ideology. The challenge of his visit to Cuba is whether he will also acknowledge the virtues of socialist practice, in health and housing, education and employment, and the general qualitative indicators of human development which, in many regards, exceed those of "developed" capitalist countries.

Robert Johnson,
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

YOU report (December 28) that a United States judge has awarded damages of \$187 million against the Cuban government for the families of the two men shot down after an illegal flight over Cuban air space in 1996. Can we assume that Washington paid compensation on a similar scale for the passengers and crew of the Iranian airliner that they shot down a few years ago while it was on a notes full scheduled flight?

John J. Cox,
Teddington, Gloucestershire

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Revisionism in the Balkans

THANK you for reminding us about what the wars in Bosnia and Croatia were about — appeasing aggression. No fighting in Bosnia, but it's a lousy peace (January 11). Seven years on, many individuals have been doubling in the art of historical revisionism, apportioning "equal blame to all ethnic groups". In truth, the war waged and instability in the region continues to this day because of the expansionist aspirations of Belgrade's regime and the West's continued support of it. And it is not just Croatia and Bosnia that suffer, as Karen Coleman points out (Insurgency looms in Kosovo, January 11). Serbian troops there are continuing, unchecked, as they terrorise the majority Albanian population.

First Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, now Kosovo, Vojvodina, Montenegro... all the insurrections and instability from 1991 in these regions continues because the West appeases Slobodan Milosevic and his armed cronies, as opposed to using the tactics they use against other tyrants such as Saddam Hussein.

Erica Zlotnick,
Toronto, Canada

PRESIDENT Clinton acknowledged on December 18 that he had been wrong in his "18-month Exit Strategy" prediction that enough of Bosnia's political, economic and social life would be rebuilt by June 1998 to justify withdrawal of American troops. Instead, in his press conference, he called for "paid compensation on a similar scale for the passengers and crew of the Iranian airliner that they shot down a few years ago while it was on a notes full scheduled flight".

John J. Cox,
Teddington, Gloucestershire

The Guardian Weekly

Nothing venture in New Zealand

THE personal is the political. That is the real nature of the political culture commanded in New Zealand through the palace, the "perfumed steamroller", Jenny Shipley, of whom Charlotte Denry writes (Wellington beat on an iron fist, December 14). The new prime minister simply intends to continue the suburban ideological drive of his recent governments. Their members come by and large from members of a state that was previously over-protective and stuffy, but not that tried to give most children basic opportunities and to protect most citizens from the worst risks in life.

So many of our politicians seem to need to display a sort of adult independence by exposing the rest of us, the citizens who put them into office, to increasing risk. In particularly distasteful cases, some seem now downright vindictive and punitive towards those not willing or able to embrace the ideology to compete, to assert their individual choice, or whatever. During the recent fiscal referendum on state superannuation, for example, some aggressively self-sufficient individual-in-office daily declared that we must all learn to "manage risk". Why should I be forced to regard one of the great inevitabilities as a personal "risk"? And who knows what risks they are forcing on the present generations of children with the reckless restructuring of our national community?

However, our new PM and her cohort seem distinctly "risk-averse" in one respect. As they steadily secured their own socio-economic status recently — by voting themselves more money. Voters may well remember that next time the "astonishing" and "freakish" results that status — at election time.

Stan Jones,
Hamilton, New Zealand

than usual; and b) humans are a significant cause of that warming.

It is in the face of conflicting evidence that society must adhere to the Precautionary Principle, which states that we must proceed as if humans do have an impact until such time as conclusive evidence to the contrary is presented. It is a shame that politicians in both the US and Canada (two of the highest per capita creators of greenhouse gases) are motivated by the politics of ignorance towards basic precautions.

Gratiana Shiley,
Victoria, BC, Canada

A FEW of your correspondents appear to hold the United States responsible for global warming, and some of their comments are unreliable.

Twenty-five years ago the Club of Rome projected that one-third of the male population of Washington DC lives more than a dozen years longer on average than the other two-thirds (December 14). To say that this is because the large group (black males) smoke more and use condoms less is an unfounded racial conclusion. Violence accounts for 50 per cent of the deaths in the US. There is the direct violence from guns, but more importantly there is the endemic violence of a racist United States society that imposes poverty and lack of hope in a large segment of the population.

Tim Farris,
St Mary, Jamaica

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WHEN Kenneth Kauria was told regime mule and applied laws that permitted political opponents to be arrested without charge and denied without trial, he was told the "perfunctory way" of which he was the author.

Ron Westerman,
Geyersville, Germany

YOUR informative December 21 article on the Alamo (the Alamo) incorrectly stated that Field Marshall Montgomery (who had not yet attained that rank) "staged the Afrika Korps under General Rommel" (January 14). General Rommel, who never distinguished himself in that distinction.

Paul Sanford,
Courtenay, BC, Canada

WHEN a few more people in the labour report brought in a new law, the council called for them to be jailed. When Dame Shirley Porter over Westminster's 227 million (December 29) Labour's local government minister, Hilary Armstrong, feebly bailed the site, it was the moral decency to pay up.

Steven,
London

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Briefly

IN YOUR editorial (December 26) you rightly emphasise that "the hungry child should be fed", as a moral responsibility and a universal human need. You review, with thoughtfulness and detail, the tragedies of deprived children and mothers in developing and developed countries. However, I was amazed that you did not spare a word for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children who are being murdered by the brutal sanctions imposed on Iraq by the callous policies of the United States supported by Britain.

(Dr) Ismail Zaid,
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

ALTHOUGH the statistics are inconspicuously presented they show clearly that one-third of the male population of Washington DC lives more than a dozen years longer on average than the other two-thirds (December 14). To say that this is because the large group (black males) smoke more and use condoms less is an unfounded racial conclusion. Violence accounts for 50 per cent of the deaths in the US. There is the direct violence from guns, but more importantly there is the endemic violence of a racist United States society that imposes poverty and lack of hope in a large segment of the population.

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Lawyers for Botha plan to fight back

David Bernsford
in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA'S former state president, P. W. Botha, is ignoring a final appeal by the truth commission to testify before it and is expected to fight prosecution by arguing that Archbishop Desmond Tutu's investigators are in breach of an implied agreement.

Indications that Mr Botha is going to fight to the bitter end came from his lawyers last week when Nelson Mandela had intervened personally in the row by giving the former head of state extra public funding to defray the commission.

Mr Mandela's office confirmed the president had been party to a decision that Mr Botha's lawyers will be paid more than twice the going rate to represent him against the commission. "We did not want to be vindictive," explained the justice minister, Dullah Omar.

President Mandela has long appeared more sympathetic to Mr Botha — responsible for one of the uglier periods of apartheid rule — than to F. W. de Klerk, who let him out of prison and surrendered power on behalf of the white minority.

Sources close to Mr Botha say that his delegation against his prosecution for refusing to appear before the truth panel will be that there is an understanding that he would not answer to his past queries. His lawyers will protest that the commission then subpoenaed him before heeding to read 1,700 pages of submissions he had made.

Mr Botha is due to appear in court in his home town of George next week. He faces a possible sentence of 30 years imprisonment, or a 20,000 rand (\$4,000) fine, for ignoring the subpoena.

Lawyers have been quoted in the South African press as saying the matter could take up to two years to trial and that Mr Botha is unlikely to be imprisoned. However, one Johannesburg newspaper, the Mail and Guardian, said last week that there was no reason why it could not be dealt with expeditiously and suggested that "the obvious need for action for the courts to impose a two-year sentence, as it is not expected to be cooperative fully with the commission".

The paper's Africa correspondent, Patrick de Sautoy, claimed that support for the Botha regime was a high-water mark in the late President F. W. de Klerk's tenure, who was quoted as telling an aide that "genocide in those sort of countries isn't very important".

Other newspapers took up Le Figaro's allegations to support demands for an inquiry into French responsibility, which has never been admitted, despite a parliamentary inquiry in Belgium that examined France's role in Rwanda.

Algeria bristles at EU visit

Ben Black

THE Algerian government, infuriated at suggestions that it is to blame for recent massacres, is making clear that it will fight down tough conditions for a European Union delegation being sent to reflect mounting concern about the bloodshed.

An diplomats lost week prepared for a mission to be led by Britain, the current EU president, all the signs were that its terms of reference would be severely restricted — and that it may not be possible to overcome disagreements to allow it to go ahead.

Algeria said that it was prepared to meet EU diplomats to discuss "controlling terrorism". Robin Cook, Britain's Foreign Secretary, cautiously announced the mission "in principle" after outrage over reports that 1,000 people had been killed in 10 days during the Muslim month of Ramadan.

But Ahmed Benyamina, Algeria's ambassador to Britain, complained that an original offer by Germany to help the military regime fight terrorism had now become something quite different. "In principle, we have no objection to such an EU visit, but the mandate is still not agreed," he said. "The whole idea has been perverted and has come



A boy peeps out from behind armed citizens of Daira de Ramika, western Algeria. The village was one of the four where armed gangs killed more than 400 people on the first day of Ramadan

down to a mere offer of humanitarian aid. That's not good enough. We're obviously not talking about the same thing, so the visit is still in limbo."

The recent bloodletting has been attributed to the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), but there are suspicions — angrily rejected by Algeria — that its security forces may be implicated, either via infiltration of extremist groups or by turning a blind eye to atrocities to encourage people to reject the fundamentalists.

It is hoped that the visit might take place before January 28, when the EU's 15 foreign ministers meet in Brussels. Ministers themselves will not go to Algeria, but officials will have to be senior enough in protocol terms to meet the country's foreign minister, Ahmed Attaf, British Foreign Office officials, anxious to assuage the Algerians, played down expectations of the mission. They insisted that its mandate was not expected to be agreed until this week. That Algerian concerns would be taken into account, and that the EU wanted to express its concern and see how it could help.

Britain has said it might suggest providing counselling to victims of terrorism. But one diplomat said: "All we can do is offer it up to the Algerians. If they don't want it, they don't want it."

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The Week

THE US government welcomed a call for dialogue from Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, but again urged Tehran to enter official talks. Washington Post, page 15

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John J. Cox

Jobless embarrass Jospin and Kohl

Paul Webster in Paris and Ian Traynor in Bonn

FRANCE'S increasingly militant unemployed threw out a fresh challenge to the government last week when an offer by the prime minister, Lionel Jospin, of more than \$180 million in emergency unemployment benefits was rejected by Jobseifers' representatives. Another national day of street marches for the unemployed took place on Tuesday.

In a related attempt to win back the credibility of his Socialised government after three weeks of demonstrations by Jobseifers, Mr Jospin had announced an emergency fund to help the long-term unemployed.

The offer followed a move by riot police into several of the 30 welfare centres occupied by demonstrators claiming payments of about \$500

each to cover end-of-year bills. At other centres, mainly in Marseille, demonstrators dispersed before police could act, but four protest organisations, claiming that government action was insufficient, said they would continue their strike.

Mr Jospin was forced into a hurried decision after countryside marches last week followed a strike at unemployment offices. Most of the marches received benefits averaging only \$650 a month because they have been out of work for more than a year.

Of France's 3.1 million jobless, about 1.1 million are long-term unemployed. There were fears of further discontent after Communist, Green and Socialist members of the governing coalition expressed sympathy for the demonstration and criticised the labour minister, Martine Aubry, for failing to respond quickly.

Mr Jospin made his offer after meeting trade unions, employers and representatives of jobless workers' organisations. It was the first time that the unemployed had been consulted.

In Germany unemployment soared to a fresh peak of more than 4.5 million last month, forcing Chancellor Helmut Kohl to open an election year last week by conceding that an earlier pledge to halve the jobless rate by the millennium would go unachieved.

Climbing to its highest level in the history of the post-war federal republic, unemployment last month stood at almost 12 per cent nationally, with a 20 per cent rate in east Germany double that in the west, it was announced last week.

Bernhard Jagoda, the head of the federal employment office in Nuremberg, said he did not expect any improvement this year. "All in all, economic dynamism was not strong

enough in 1997 for recovery in the labour market," he said. Exactly two years ago, when the jobless rate went through the 4-million pahi threshold, Mr Kohl promised to halve the rate by 2000. Last week he admitted defeat. The target would "certainly not be reached," he stated.

It was his first public admission that his policy had gone away. It could hardly come at a worse time as he prepares to bid for a record fifth term as chancellor in September, and faces a couple of crucial regional elections before then.

Four of Germany's leading Euro-skeptics — three economists and a law professor — went to the supreme court this week to challenge the government's enthusiasm for the single European currency and to try to get the project scrapped.

Le Monde, page 13

Israel plans to double settlements

David Sharrook in Jerusalem

ISRAEL plans to double its settler population in territory destined to become a Palestinian state by building more than 30,000 new homes, it was revealed last week.

News of the construction plan, which would take 20 years, was revealed by the daily Ha'aretz newspaper and has pushed tensions between the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Palestinians and Washington to new limits.

President Clinton's Middle East envoy, Dennis Ross, who made little headway in meetings with the two sides last week before White House appointments later this month, said further construction was "not helpful".

The European Union said that the plan would damage the peace process.

The United States has asked Israel to suspend building to improve the climate in peace talks, but Mr Netanyahu has argued that there is nothing in the existing agreements which prevents "natural growth".

Benjamin Ben-El-Mechaieq, who served as housing minister in the last Labour government, said such huge construction would wipe out peace hopes.

The housing ministry confirmed that it has plans to build 30,000 more homes in the settlements by 2020, but denied that nearly half of the projects have been given the green light.

"We conducted a survey of potential building possibilities in the country, and we arrived at the conclusion that in the settlements, 30,000 more homes could be built, half of which would be for the Jewish population," the ministry spokesman, Moshe Elit, said. He said the survey was conducted because of forecasts that Israel's population would grow by 1 million over the next 20 years.

If construction goes ahead, the settlement of Ariel, 15km southwest of Nablus, would more than double in size, adding 3,600 more homes to its present 1,800.

The defence minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, the supreme planning authority in the Israeli-occupied territories across the Green Line under military occupation, has already approved 2,150 of Ariel's new homes, it said.

The Ma'aleh Ephraim settlement, at the edge of the Jordan Rift Valley, will be expanded from 400 homes by an additional 561 units, all approved for construction, it said. And Ma'aleh Admunim, east of Jerusalem, will have a population of around 20,000, up from 10,000 residents at present, it said.

"For all practical purposes, there is no peace process right now," the Palestinian Information minister, Yasser Arafat, said. "The Israeli position is more settlement, more land confiscation and more aggression in refusing to implement the [peace] agreement."

On October 3, villagers staged a rally of 10,000 people in the area, calling for work on the dam to be stopped and the project reviewed in consultation with the people. They received no response from the project or the government; in fact the work was speeded up.

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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 16 1998

Child labour figures put Italy to shame

John Hooper in Roma

FORTY years after it joined the European Community and more than a decade after it overtook Britain in the league table of national wealth, Italy still has almost 300,000 child workers.

This statistic — which neither the government nor employers have challenged — is based on research by the biggest trade union federation, Sergio Cofferati, head of the leftwing CGIL, produced the figure on a visit to India where Italy's prime minister, Romano Prodi, has been trying to open doors for Italian traders and investors.

Mr Cofferati was warning of the dangers of buying goods from overseas, in companies that used child labour. For example, Italy is a big importer of footballs, stitched by children in Indian sweatshops. But the problem, he said, was not confined to the developing world.

"We estimate that in Italy nearly 300,000 children are made to work on a daily basis," he said. "Precise data do not exist. All we have are the figures for reported industrial accidents on which this estimate is based."

The biggest concentration of under-age workers is thought to be in and around Naples, where their wages average about 100,000 lire (\$40) a week. Many children are employed in the manufacture of false designer clothes and accessories. There are hundreds of small family businesses turning out false goods on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius.

Other under-age workers serve in bars and shops or lend a hand as unofficially acknowledged motor mechanics. The use of children as drug couriers is common.

The minimum working age in Italy is 15. But a recent survey for the employment ministry found that 30 per cent of boys between the ages of 10 and 14 in southern Italy were in employment.

In 1995, the year for which figures are available, government inspectors looked into cases of suspected under-age employment at about 50,000 companies. Their suspicions were proved right in 1,112 per cent of the small commercial and industrial firms they investigated.



A Pakistani crowd carries the bodies of Shias shot in a Lahore cemetery last Sunday. The protesters tried to storm the Punjab parliament and burned buildings in anger at the massacre, in which 28 Shias died and at least 36 were injured. A Sunni Muslim group, Jhangvi, claimed responsibility for the killings

Woman power halts work on Indian dam

John Vidal

IT WAS a scene Mahatma Gandhi might have envisaged. After months of secret preparations, the 10,000 Indian villagers travelled in complete silence at the dead of night under a full moon. Led by women and dodging police roadblocks, they reached their destination at dawn. In the half-light they streamed down the steep valley to the huge partly-built dam on the Narmada (r.e. to Madhya Pradesh).

Within minutes they had surprised the few guards and cut radio communications between the construction camp and the outside world. By 6.30am one of the largest peaceful sit-ins in Indian history had begun.

Details of the capture of the Maheshwar dam by villagers who will lose their homes or land if the 30-metre high barrier is completed are still sketchy, but reports from Delhi on Monday suggested that 25,000 protesters were at the remote site.

"Thousands of people from other areas are pouring in. At least 2,000 people are preparing to stay indefinitely," said a spokesman for the Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save Narmada Movement), which has

been mobilising people against the project.

The Maheshwar dam is part of the \$4.0 billion Narmada Valley Development Project, which involves plans for 30 big dams, 135 medium-sized ones and 3,000 small ones in the valley. The World Bank pulled out of the controversial project five years ago because of fierce local and international protests against proposals that would have displaced more than 100,000 people.

The 300-metre-long Maheshwar dam, the first privatised hydroelectric power project in India, will submerge the homes of more than 2,200 families in 61 villages and destroy thousands of acres of cotton, chillies and wheat.

Opponents claim it will produce electricity for only a few hours a day, and that it has quadrupled in cost in 10 years. They say they have received no compensation and that the dam will destroy the economy of a large area.

The government of Madhya Pradesh says the project will bring electricity and economic development to areas hundreds of kilometres away.

Protests against the damming of the Narmada began more than 10 years ago, and thousands of women have said they are prepared to drown rather than move. This is the first time that all work has been stopped on one of the dam sites.

The people have taken over the building and construction works area. They are demanding complete stoppage of all work on the dam and a review with people's participation. The siege will continue until the demands are met," said a spokesman for the Dam Forgive.

Digvijay Singh, the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, tried to appease the villagers. Speaking in the state capital, Bhopal, he called a meeting for Thursday and officially halted construction until then.

This was rejected by the villagers. "We have stopped the work, not him," a villager replied. "We will not go until all work has been permanently stopped."

On October 3, villagers staged a rally of 10,000 people in the area, calling for work on the dam to be stopped and the project reviewed in consultation with the people. They received no response from the project or the government; in fact the work was speeded up.

Le Monde, page 13

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High noon in Pakistan's opium valley

Jonathan Steele in Timergara reports on a paramilitary mission to wipe out a drug crop

THIS battle to cut supplies of heroin to western Europe has moved into the last no-go areas of Pakistan, with paramilitary troops fanning out against some of the world's most heavily armed farmers of opium poppy.

A search-and-destroy campaign is targeting narrow ravines in North-west Frontier Province, which the police have previously been unable to enter. Foreign aid workers have been warned not to use the road across the valley floor along the Peshawar river for fear of hostage-taking.

The flood of weapons into the region during the Soviet occupation of neighbouring Afghanistan means farmers now possess machine-guns, rocket-launchers and even Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

"These are rough and tough hills, which are unapproachable and inaccessible," said Qazi Mohammed Yusuf, the district commissioner, as he sat in his office in Timergara, the capital of Dir district, Pakistan's largest poppy-growing region.

The use of force in the Nihang valley, the last no-go area in Dir, is being co-ordinated with the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). The programme's new chief, Pino Arlacchi, is a former Italian anti-Mafia adviser. He visited Afghanistan recently to urge the Taliban authorities to move against their own opium producers, and continued on to Peshawar, the main city in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province.

The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is virtually open, and people on both sides belong to the same ethnic group, although they are known as Pathans in Afghanistan and Pathans in Pakistan. For the first time UN officials are pressing for simultaneous action on drugs in both countries. They want to prevent the "balloon effect", under which a clampdown on poppy-growing in one area encourages it in another.

In Dir, where the planting season has just started, the effects of a possible reduction in Afghanistan's opium harvest are already visible. "Traders have been talking up prices, and we have evidence that more farmers are planning opium than last year," said Simon Gillett, the UNDCP's senior technical adviser in Dir.

Even in valleys where poppy-growing has been eliminated for several years, farmers admit they are tempted to start again.

Alongside the Pakistani government's use of force, the UN drug programme offers a set of economic incentives to end poppy cultivation. The original aim was to persuade farmers to grow alternative crops, but officials realised that opium-producing areas needed more than that. There had to be a programme of sustainable development, including tarred roads, irrigation, electricity and training if farmers were to be weaned off poppy cultivation.

A man can easily carry a sack of opium gum down a mountain-side

oo his back. To reach the market and make the same profit from heavier crops, such as citrus or tomatoes, a farmer needs a tarred road and a pick-up truck.

Pakistan and Afghanistan became Asia's top opium producers in the late 1970s after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of the mullahs, who used opium-growing to help finance the war against the Soviet Union. Difficulties in transporting opium prompted traders and smugglers to set up laboratories in the border areas to process heroin, which is lighter and more valuable.

"You need a critical mass of farmers to give up if you want to turn the tide in an area," said Mr Gillett. But, in the narrow, snow-capped Nihang valley, the critical mass is still poppy. Village elders have intimidated farmers with the threat of having their houses burnt down if they do not plant the poppy.

In most of Pakistan the campaign against the poppy has been remarkably successful, with production dropping from 800 tonnes in 1980 to 24 tonnes last year.

Across the border in Afghanistan, however, the Taliban rulers have understood that they cannot get rid without doing some enforcement, the Pakistanis have. The use of paramilitary troops in Dir is meant to impress foreign governments as much as the highlanders of Nihang.

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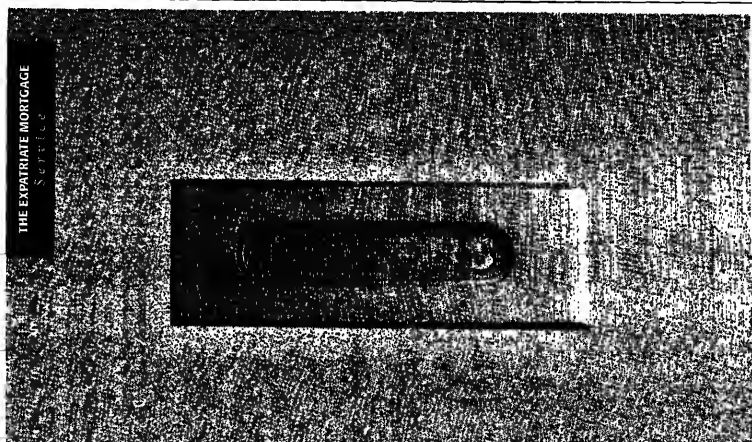
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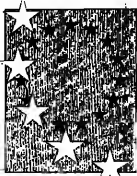
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Continent basks in splendid isolation



Europe this week

Martin Walker

THE INGRAINED sense of detachment and uniqueness in the "right little, tight little island" of Britain has long been both a joke and an irritation to its European neighbours. Its modern manifestation has been the reluctance of Conservative and now Labour governments to join one of those characteristically leftist European ventures, the Schengen agreement to scrap frontier controls across the continent.

Signed 12 years ago in the tiny Luxembourg village of Schengen, with a splitting distance of France on one side and Germany on the other, the agreement in theory allows a European Union citizen to travel from Spain to Finland without a passport. Once the single currency arrives, continental Europe could return to that golden age when the denied admission must leave the country. It now seems resigned to building detention centres to hold refugees pending deportation.

And in a separate but hardly unrelated development Germany's government and main opposition parties agreed to scrap its post-1945 law against espionage, citing the need to protect Germany from international crime.

The problem is that until the Amsterdam treaty is ratified, and until

dial refugees, France and Austria re-instated border patrols with Italy, whose almost unpoliceable 4,800km coastline makes it the favoured port of entry for illegal immigrants and their smugglers.

There were panic meetings of the Schengen nations to Brussels, and of Europe's police chiefs in Rome. And both Kurdish spokesmen and Turkish human rights activists charged that the Turkish government was deliberately encouraging the exodus, to punish Europe for its brusque rebuff of Turkish hopes of eventual membership at last month's EU summit in Luxembourg. The main excuse for Turkey's exclusion was its human rights record, notably its harsh campaign against separatist Kurdish guerrillas.

The European Commission almost washed its hands of the matter, saying that the Schengen principle should remain inviolate, and reminding member states that Schengen balanced open internal borders with intensely tightened borders with the outside world. The Schengen agreement has sobered civil liberties groups with its powers of strengthened police co-operation to control crime, drugs and terrorism.

Police forces now have the right of cross-border arrest and "hot pursuit" and are building a fearsome Schengen-wide database of names and details of known or suspected criminals. Last week Italy, under pressure from Germany, Austria and France, agreed to abolish its 15-day grace period before a refugee denied admission must leave the country. It now seems resigned to building detention centres to hold refugees pending deportation.

And in a separate but hardly unrelated development Germany's government and main opposition parties agreed to scrap its post-1945 law against espionage, citing the need to protect Germany from international crime.

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Kurdish refugees outside the charity centre at Santa Foca, near Oranto, in Italy

PHOTO: PER PAOLO GRI

EU governments then agree a common policy on immigration and asylum for refugees, each Schengen country is stuck with the implications of varying national laws.

The panicked reaction by the north Europeans to the small Kurdish exodus now reveals the problem with Schengen, but it also points to something more profound: to the way that the EU as a whole is starting to catch the "right little, tight little island" mentality.

A STRIKING sign of this mood of splendid European isolationism came this month from the European finance commissioner, Yves Thibault de Silguy, who insisted that the Asian financial crisis was having only "a marginal, even negligible effect" on the EU economy and the move to a single currency.

The euro already acts as a shield for Europe, even before the single currency is launched, he said. "The markets have confidence in Europe, because of the sound financial policies that all member states have pursued for some years in order to meet the criteria for joining the euro."

The first full debate among EU commissioners on the Asian crisis was dominated by De Silguy's ebullient report. He brushed aside accusations that Europe was complacently distancing itself from the threat to the global economy by pointing out that the five months of the Asian crisis had seen growth in Europe, low inflation, and falling interest rates.

"Our European banks have a total exposure of only \$364 billion, and half of that is in the relatively sound economies of Singapore and Hong Kong," De Silguy said, adding that the EU had "full confidence" in the much-criticised rescue strategies being pursued by the International Monetary Fund.

Europe's future growth did not depend on exports, he insisted, claiming that Europe's recovery was now fuelled by domestic demand.

This detachment looked a touch surreal last week when the 20 European commissioners took the Channel tunnel train to London for a day of meetings with the British government to discuss the coming six months of Britain's presidency of the EU Council. It was almost a love-in.

The Commission president, Jacques Santer, said he hoped the UK presidency would "transmit to the peoples of Europe the new spirit of dynamism, vigour and creativity that is once again the hallmark of the United Kingdom today".

Skating over Britain's exception to the Schengen system and its refusal to join the first wave of the new single currency, Prime Minister Tony Blair replied that the presidency "presents a very great opportunity for Britain to show that by being constructive and engaged and positive, we can play a leading role in shaping Europe's future".

Really should set in this week as Blair and Santer arrived in Tokyo for the EU-Japan summit, even as the Japanese prime minister was juggling with the calendar to try to spare them an hour or two. The Diet, Japan's parliament, decided to reconvene to grapple with the Asian financial crisis on the very day scheduled for the EU summit.

If the Europeans don't think the Asian collapse has much to do with them, why should Asians put themselves out to meet these new representatives of splendid isolation?

Money makes politics go round



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

TO HAIL the end of an era is often to court ridicule, but when Bill Clinton announced, on his first morning back to the White House in 1993, that he would deliver a balanced federal budget in 1995, few disputed that a milestone had been reached.

An entire generation of American politics has been defined by the continuing and deepening failure of the

United States government to balance its books. Government deficits helped form the politics of the Reagan era in the 1980s and shaped the alternative politics of the Clinton era that has replaced it. They have been one of the principal causes of the convergent economic policies of left and right over the past two decades. But the prospect of a balanced budget means that those days could be coming to an end.

Before the oil price rise of the mid-1970s, the US had initially run a modest deficit except in time of war, when defence spending rose. Until recent times, the big deficit years of the 20th century were 1918-19 and 1942-45. In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam war, the deficit again hit a post-1945 record.

Then came the oil price explosion which triggered a massive rise in economic policies across the West into conditions akin to those of war. In 1974, the US budget deficit was \$8 billion; but in 1975 it leapt to \$53 billion, a total that had previously been exceeded only at the height of the second world war. After that, with occasional fluctuations,

the deficit steadily rose higher year-on-year, peaking at \$290 billion in 1982, which was also — not entirely without coincidence — the year of Clinton's election. Originally, the cause of high deficits was the oil shortage and consequent price rise. But before the oil shock had been squashed out of the economic system, the traditional rules were re-written once again, this time by the Republicans.

Reagan inherited a record deficit when he took office. His response was to increase it, by a combination of tax cuts (which reduced government income) and higher defence spending (which exceeded cuts in social programmes and thus added to government spending). The result was the West's victory in the cold war as the Soviet Union collapsed under the burden of its efforts to keep up with US defence spending. However, the price was that when Clinton succeeded George Bush in 1993, the deficit was nearly two-and-a-half times higher in real terms than it had been when Reagan succeeded Jimmy Carter in 1981.

As a result of the Reagan years, gross federal debt ballooned from just under \$1 trillion in 1981 to about \$5.5 trillion today — a direct result of the nation's lurch into deficit budgeting. Last year the government estimated that the US debt-to-GDP ratio for 1997 would be some 69 per cent. This is more than twice the ratio in the Carter-Reagan handover year of 1981, which was the record post-war low for national debt. No US president for the foreseeable future can therefore afford to relax fiscal discipline.

A watershed has nevertheless been crossed — both in budgetary terms and also in political terms. Within the constraints of budgetary balance, and while American non-industrial growth continues at current levels, US economic policy makers now have many more genuine options than for many years past. Instead of agreeing to reduce the deficit, politicians can now begin to discuss how to dispose of any surplus. In policy terms, the era of convergence is now giving way to an era of divergence.

For the Republicans who created most of the US deficit crisis of the late 20th century, the inattentive response to Clinton's budgetary

achievement is to blow any future surplus in tax cuts. In an election year — and every other year is an election year in the US — the electoral attractions of tax cuts are easy to see, which is why so many incumbent governors of both parties are planning tax cuts at state level before the voters go to the polls in November. At the federal level, however, Clinton is not showing his hand until he sends the 1998 Budget to Congress after his State of the Union speech at the end of this month. Even so, Clinton is clearly under pressure to invest the surplus in public goods rather than to give it to individuals to invest in private ones.

The passing — for the moment — of the era of budget deficits does not wipe the slate clean of the problems and inherited fears of the past. But it alters the centre of gravity of the debate about "who collects what money from whom in order to spend on what", which, as Gore Vidal recently wrote in the *New Yorker*, "is all there is to politics, said in a serious country should be the central preoccupation of the media". And that, surely, can only be a moment about which to give thanks.

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The Week in Britain James Lewis

Mr Cook, the VIP lounge, his wife and his lovers

IT HAD been known for some months that the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, had parted from his wife of 28 years, who is a consultant immunologist in Scotland, and taken up with his Commons secretary, Gaynor Regan. It seemed like a straightforward parting of ways, and little was made of it.

The tale took on a different complexion last week when Dr Margaret Cook 'let slip' in an interview that her husband had had several affairs during their marriage. She told how the break-up came about in a VIP lounge at London's Heathrow airport when her husband was telephoned by the Prime Minister's press secretary, Alistair Campbell, to say that a Sunday newspaper had 'got the story' of his affair with Ms Regan.

Mr Campbell's instruction was that the Foreign Secretary should remain in the country to face the music. So Mr Cook took his wife aside, confessed to his relationship with Ms Regan, and told her that their marital holiday was off and the marriage over.

Until the scandal re-surfaced, Mr Cook was clearly enjoying himself. After a stinty start he had been moving with some assurance on the world stage and was also the star of a TV documentary in which he was portrayed as a modern politician imitating one of government's stiffer institutions with a new sense of openness and dynamism.

There was much speculation as to whether the revelations about his colourful private life would hurt his effectiveness as Foreign Secretary. In which role he claims to pursue an 'ethical' foreign policy. Fortunately he has never been a moralist.

There were quick to point out that Labour in opposition was relentless in its pursuit of Conservative ministers who strayed from the straight and narrow.

Mr Cook has now dropped plans to have Ms Regan accompany him on his forthcoming trip to Washington and Ottawa. It is thought the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, feared that Mr Cook's marital situation might overshadow the visit's importance.

GORDON BROWN is today the Chancellor of the Exchequer, rather than prime minister, because he and Mr Blair agreed not to split the Labour party by standing against one another in the leadership election following the sudden death of John Smith. That at least was the general understanding.

A biography of the Chancellor, placed on sale prematurely by a Glasgow bookshop last week, offers a different story: that Mr Blair broke a secret promise not to stand against Mr Brown in the leadership election. The book also details a "whispering campaign" mounted against Mr Brown at the time, in which roles were allegedly played by Peter Mandelson, now Minister without Portfolio, and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, both close allies of Mr Blair.

If the Chancellor has indeed co-operated in the preparation of the book, as is claimed, it would do much to explain his continuing remoteness from the charmed prime ministerial circle, and his occasional policy battles with Cabinet colleagues such as Mr Cook, who is known to covet the Treasury job.

DAMAGE estimated at £10 million was caused when a tornado hit the Sussex seaside town of Seaside. The twister, travelling along the beach at Seaside Hill, which juts out into the English Channel, damaging about 1,000 homes and uprooting the garden observatories of the astronomer, Patrick Moore.

Climatic conditions in Britain are not often ripe for tornadoes. When they occur, vortices are usually small, wind speeds are modest and they sometimes even pass unnoticed. At Seaside, speed at the core of the rotating wind reached more than 100mph, but only two people were slightly injured.

WHILE MOST British towns are wondering what to do to mark the millennium, the Sussex town of Lewes has decided to allow Rodin's sculpture. The Kiss, to return to its original home, if only for six months, from June 1998 to January 2000.

The sculpture, one of four similar works by Rodin, was commissioned some 80 years ago by E P Warren, an American businessman who lived in Lewes, and who stipulated that the genitals of the man depicted in the piece should be "complete and distinct". The small indecency of the small town concluded that the sculpture would "inflame the passions of the young soldiers" billeted there and it was withdrawn from public view, ending up eventually at London's Tate Gallery, which is to lend it for the millennium.

WHITEHALL sources have confirmed that the Security Service, M15, is speeding up the destruction of thousands of files on individuals it once considered subversive as part of an attempt to modernise.

The policy shift was prompted by embarrassing disclosures last year by David Slayter, a former M15 officer, who revealed that the agency kept files on a number of prominent politicians — including the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

The head of M15, Stephen Lander, has said privately that the number of files held by the agency were "in the low hundreds of thousands". M15 is preparing a new brochure, expected in March, outlining new priorities, including countering international terrorism and organised crime.

Austin
THE ONE WITH THE LITTLE CHARGER
REAR IS A JOY TO DRIVE



Mowlam gamble pays off

John Mullin

THE controversial decision by the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, to go to the Maze prison in Belfast to address loyalist prisoners last week paid off when they reversed their opposition to the peace process.

As a result of the Maze decision by the Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Fighters, the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), which is linked to the UDA/UFF, took its place at the negotiating table within that context a number of issues can be addressed.

Another loyalist political party, the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), which speaks for the Ulster Volunteer Force, also attended the talks after threatening to withdraw last week.

The Government's euphoria was undermined over the weekend, however, following another attack on a Catholic by the fringe Loyalist Volunteer Force.

Terry Enright, a doorman who was related to the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, was shot dead by gunmen outside a Belfast nightclub owned by relatives of the PUP leader, David Ervine.

The UDP is opposed to the cease-fire and peace process, and has killed two Catholics since the murder of its leader, Billy Wright, at the Maze three weeks ago.

Stuart Millar
A LAW designed to tackle stalkers was used last week to protect a disabled mother from her aggressive son in a case which has made legal history.

In a verdict which lawyers believe could open the floodgates for dozens of similar cases, Chloë Sharroo was found guilty of harassing his widowed mother to such an extent that she suffered psychological harm.

Ms Mowlam met the five-man leadership of the 130 UDA/UFF prisoners in the Maze for 50 minutes. She emphasised that there could be no settlement on Northern Ireland's future without talks and insisted that the most important rule for the talks subcommittee dealing with confidence-building measures.

Asked afterwards about prisoners and possible changes in prison arrangements, Ms Mowlam said: "If we can get confidence in the talks process and if we can get progress in the weeks and months ahead, within that context a number of issues can be addressed."

She ruled out any benefits for prisoners belonging to paramilitary organisations actively engaged in terrorism.

Among the UDA/UFF leadership she met in the governor's office at H-Block 7 were Michael Stone, who is serving six life sentences for murder, and Johnny Adair, nicknamed Mad Dog. He was jailed in 1995 for 16 years for directing terrorism as UFF commander on Belfast's Shankill Road.

Ms Mowlam apologised to victims' relatives who had complained about her initiative. She thanked others who had suffered but who had telephoned their support.

She said: "I have listened and it's a difficult balance. I don't want to leave a stone unturned. I want to be sure we did everything we could to keep the process moving forward."

Ms Mowlam later briefly met IRA prisoners' leaders and a delegate from the Ulster Volunteer Force in the governor's office in the respective blocks, H-Block 8 and H-Block 11. Among those she spoke to was Harry Maguire, an IRA prisoner serving two life sentences for the murder of two army corporals in 1988, and Noel Largo, a UVF man given four life terms.

Ms Mowlam, who has been accused of setting a dangerous precedent, confirmed she would go back to see convicted terrorists in a new capacity.

That position has proved controversial in Northern Ireland, and Lord Alderdice, leader of the Alliance Party, launched an angry attack after the meeting. He said that the loyalist paramilitaries had tipped off the situation, and Ms Mowlam had fallen into their web. "Both she and they claim a great victory, thoroughly concealing them as the important pillars of our future, not democratic politicians."

Gary McMichael, leader of the UDP, denied there had been any recognition by Ms Mowlam in coming to see the prisoners that the talks and the issues at the heart of the crisis were being taken seriously.

deal with people whose obsessive behaviour caused lasting psychological harm to their victims, even though there was no physical assault.

Wood Green crown court, in north London, heard that for three years Sharroo, a former jeweller, persistently forced his mother to hand over cash to feed his heroin addiction.

Parakeet Sharroo, aged 63, gave her son hundreds of pounds, but whenever she appeared hesitant, he ranted and raved, inflicting "mental" hounding on her. Sometimes he went "berserk", assaulting her and leading to 300 prosecutions a year, but experts believe that the figure will be far greater as a result of the legislation's wide scope.

psychologist described as a "major depressive disorder" and "post-traumatic stress syndrome". The jury took 34 minutes to reject Sharroo's claims that he had been repeatedly lied to by her evidence.

They found him guilty of causing her psychologically-based actual bodily harm between January 1994 and July 1997. Judge Richard Lacey QC, removed Sharroo, aged 32, in custody until January 30 as a result of the legislation's wide scope.

Blair breaks welfare taboos

Ewen MacAniff in Tokyo and Michael White

FUNDAMENTAL changes in key state benefits to direct extra resources towards the poor at the likely expense of the affluent were signalled last week by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, as he announced the launch of a nationwide crusade to sell his reform of the welfare system.

Welfare pensioners may not automatically get the basic state pension child benefit for the better-off may be taxed, and highly paid mothers could be entitled to day-subsidised maternity pay in order to extend it to the low paid.

Undertaken by last month's backbench revolt over the cut in single-parent benefit, Mr Blair used a television broadcast from Tokyo to underline the fact that ministers intend to drive through a strategic reform programme which he repeatedly insisted would help society's poorest, not harm them.

Mr Blair played a series of "welfare roadshows" to win over party activists and persuade voters that the reform is necessary and that the present 286 billion a year system is unfair and inefficient. Ministers pre-

dict that unless welfare is drastically reformed it will cost up to £107 billion a year by 2002.

The Social Security Secretary, Harriet Harman, echoed Mr Blair's approach when she signalled a drive to direct benefits to the people who need them most.

She focused on statutory maternity pay, saying that one in five women at work receive no such state assistance when they become pregnant.

"And yet, for the most highly paid women, there's no ceiling on the amount they get, and in one case, if you earn £1 million a year you can actually get £18,000 a week from the social security system."

Turning the language of ineffectiveness inside-out, he argued that the state's responsibilities could be subjected to an "affluence test" — and lose some traditional so-called universal benefits, previously paid to everyone regardless of income, if they earn above a certain level. High on such a list will be the key universal benefits, such as the basic state pension, child benefit and state university pay.

Mr Blair was asked whether he planned less government provision for state pensions.

He said people were already providing for themselves privately. "If all the Government does is simply increase the amount of money of the basic pension, many of the poorest don't benefit from that at all. So we have to look at ways in which we can make sure that we are getting help to those people that really need it most in the system."

Ministers are desperate for an informed public debate, free of what they regard as "scare stories" whipped up by MPs, the media or anti-poverty campaigners. Mr Blair's initiative is designed to show that, contrary to some rumours, he remains the driving force behind the planned reforms.

"They are driven by principle, the need for fairness and efficiency, not simply to save money," an ally insisted, adding that the campaign may well be bloody, since even some ministers harbour doubts.

The shadow chancellor, Peter Lilley, accused Mr Blair of creating "a state of confusion" over reform because it was "not thought through".

He added: "He said before the election they were against means testing, now they are talking in terms of means testing even the universal and contributory benefits."

Dewar to run for 'Scots PM'

Lawrence Donegan

THE Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, last week confirmed he is to stand for the Scottish parliament in next year's elections.

Mr Dewar, who led the successful Yes campaign in last year's devolution referendum, said he wanted to play his part in a new and exciting phase in Scottish politics, and would eventually bow out of Westminster.

However, he will stay in the Cabinet as Scottish Secretary at least until the elections to the new parliament in May 1999.

The new Scottish parliament is to be built next to the Queen's official residence at Holyrood in Edinburgh. Mr Dewar announced at the weekend.

"The relationship with the government of the UK will be crucial," Mr Dewar said. "The new parliament must earn the confidence of Scots. If I can help in any way to achieve these aims as a member of the new parliament, I would very much want to do so."

Mr Dewar sought to dampen speculation that he would automatically assume the role of first minister — that would be the choice of the Scottish people, he said.

Mr Blair made it clear he would be glad to see Mr Dewar become the de facto Scottish prime minister. "Of course, he will be a loss to us in Government when he goes. But by standing for the Scottish parliament he will be able to exercise his qualities there. I very much welcome his decision and I think it is right for him, for Scotland and for the Labour party."

Mr Dewar's announcement followed a decision by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who told Mr Blair last week that he had no intention of leaving his current post.



Dewar: 'the new parliament must earn the confidence of Scots'

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Food crisis 'outrageous'

James Melville

THE Government is failing to implement safety measures needed to curb an "outrageous" food poisoning crisis, the head of the inquiry into Britain's worst outbreak said last week.

High Pennington of Aberdeen University, who led investigations into the E. coli outbreak in Scotland in 1996 which killed 20 people, said the inquiry into the outbreak, which has been ongoing for over a year, should also be looking at the role of butchers, restaurants and other food outlets.

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Film violence linked to crime

Kamal Ahmed

THE debate over the effect of violent films on the young took a fresh twist last week when new research suggested a link between video violence and criminal behaviour.

Although admitting that most teenagers were unlikely to be affected by violent films, the authors of the Home Office study said that for those in a "vulnerable" situation, films that glorified killing could encourage them to commit more crimes.

The report said young offenders were more likely to watch violent films and associate with the kind of characters depicted by Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger. "Violent films have the potential to cause crime," said Dr Kevin Browne, a psychologist at the University of Birmingham and author of the report.

"The nine out of 10 people who do not come from vulnerable backgrounds will be less affected but for those who are not so fortunate, the frequency of their violence may increase."

Dr Browne said he was particularly concerned that inmates at Young Offenders' institutions were allowed to watch violent films with little control. Last week the prison service said it was reviewing its guidelines.

The study re-ignited the debate on film violence and teenagers. In 1993 MPs called for certain films to be banned after Child's Play 3 was linked to the murder of James Bulger. Other films etched include Natural Born Killers and Beverly Hills Cop.

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In Brief

ABOUT expelled two of its Euro-MPs, Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr, following their long-standing criticism of welfare reform and centrally-controlled candidate lists for European elections.

THE Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, ordered a new investigation of the wrecked Hull trawler *Gaul*, which sank without sending a distress call in 1974, prompting speculation that it was involved in a spying mission against the Soviet Union.

HACKNEY council in London was heavily criticised over its handling of the case of Mark Trotter, a children's care worker and suspected paedophile. An independent inquiry found that incompetence and political infighting led to unacceptable delays in responding to complaints about him.

Dacca Aikenhead, page 12

DEBORAH PARRY, the 39-year-old nurse awaiting trial for murder in Saudi Arabia, has been transferred to hospital suffering from depression.

EVERY schoolchild will be given a free e-mail address to use for the rest of their lives under a deal — with the Internet service Excite Inc — announced at the launch of the Government's UK NetYear programme to create a computer-literate workforce.

A GUARDIAN/ICM survey into attitudes to smoking revealed widespread public support for tough new controls, and encouragement for voluntary bans at work and in restaurants and bars.

THE Government approved the first funding for Muslim schools, allaying a long-standing grievance of the Muslim community that it was suffering discrimination by being denied the education support available to other faiths.

WILLIAM STRAW, the 17-year-old son of the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, was cautioned by police following allegations by the Mirror newspaper that he supplied 1.92 grammes of cannabis to one of its reporters.

A NEW consultation paper by the BBC and ITV has called for televised party political broadcasts to be axed outside election campaigns. Executives have expressed concern that viewers are becoming increasingly bored with politics.

GORDON PARK, accused of murdering his wife 21 years ago and dumping her in Coniston Water in the Lake District, has had the charge against him dropped for lack of evidence.

SR Michael Tippett, one of the most important composers of the century, has died aged 93. Obituary, page 26

Brand drug prices may be halved

Julia Finch

THE price of non-prescription medicines such as painkillers, vitamin pills and nicotine patches is set to tumble after the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) announced it had started court action to overturn the law that allows drug companies to fix minimum prices for hundreds of popular products.

The move could prompt a super-market price war and more than halve the price of big brands such as Anadin, Lemsip and Nurofen. Vitamin pills and food supplements could eventually be sold at a fraction of their current prices.

A spokesman for the National Pharmaceutical Association, which represents Britain's 8,000 independent chemists, claims the action could put 2,000 chemists out of business.

The OFT's action comes after a three-year campaign by the super-market group Asda, which has described the price fixing as 'a burden tax on every man, woman and child in this country'.

Over-the-counter healthcare products are the only category of goods still exempt from the Resale Prices Act, which prohibits suppliers from setting minimum retail prices.

The exemption was granted in 1970 when a court decided that without resale price maintenance (RPM), small chemists' shops would be driven out of business.

The OFT said it would ask the Restrictive Practices Court to end the exemption as it was no longer in the public interest. The court proceedings are likely to take at least 18 months.

The OFT's director-general, John Bridgeman, said the number of

chemists' shops was no longer declining, and the main reason customers now visited them was to obtain prescriptions rather than to buy proprietary brands.

Last month an independent retail research group, Verdict, published a report which concluded that there were too many chemists in Britain and that 2,000 needed to be 'culled'.

According to Asda, consumers pay £300 million a year more than necessary for branded over-the-counter drugs.

But John P'Arcy, the director of the National Pharmaceutical Association, said the money ensured consumers had access to chemists. 'Pharmacists rely on profits from over-the-counter drugs. If RPM ends, pharmacists will be forced to close. We need a diverse and comprehensive pharmacy service.' He accused the OFT of 'being driven by Asda'.

Labour revolt on private schools plan

John Carvel

TONY BLAIR was last week facing a mutiny of Labour council chiefs after the Government announced plans to let private businesses take over the management of state education in deprived areas.

Senior officials disclosed that dozens of private firms were queuing for contracts in the first 'education action zones', where schools will be allowed to tear up the normal rules governing the curriculum and teachers' pay.

Local authority leaders who thought they were going to have control of the zones, which were included in the education bill published last month, were furious when the fine print of the proposals emerged last week at the North of England education conference in Bradford.

'This could be the beginning of the privatisation of the education system. It could lead to the break-up of education authorities. It could lead to the destruction of local democracy,' said Graham Lane, Labour education chairman of the Local Government Association.

The row threatens to damage Labour's tally in the run-up to council elections in May, which will be the first test in the polling booths of the Government's popularity.

The association sent a letter to Mr Blair accusing the Government

of reneging on a 'cote of confidence' signed last month by the Prime Minister, John Major, promising full consultation on the plans affecting local government.

Mr Lane said he was seeking an urgent meeting with the Education Secretary, David Blunkett, to demand withdrawal of 'totally unacceptable' proposals pending further talks with councils, school governors and teachers' unions.

The blueprint for the zones outlined by Michael Barber, Mr Blunkett's senior policy adviser, invited bids for the first 25 zones, clusters of about 20 schools which will get £500,000 a year extra for three to five years to devise innovative ways of improving education standards. Half the money came from the Government and the rest from local businesses.

The first five zones, due to open in September, will include at least one where a private business, Prof Barber said.

'Primary schools will be allowed to drop most of their lessons in history, geography, art, music and physical education as part of a bid to concentrate effort on the basics of literacy and numeracy. Blunkett is expected to announce that schools should refocus their energies on delivering a core curriculum of English, maths, science and information technology.'

The researchers described the differences as 'disappointing' though they discounted 'gender and direct discrimination', arguing that other 'interpersonal factors' might be leading to increased discrimination.

Mr Kivimäki said: 'These are the best employers, who have co-operated with the statistics to think what is happening at the other end of the scale.' These results reflect a wealth of other evidence of discrimination suffered by black and Asian workers. The most recent figures drawn up by the TUC from the official Labour Force Survey show the unemployment rate among black workers to be nearly 10 per cent, compared with 7 per cent among white workers.

This stage, required by most large companies, involves candidates doing a series of tests and exercises over one or two days.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Crime 'crisis' based on myth

Alan Travis

PUBLIC ignorance about law and order is widespread and lies at the heart of a crisis of confidence in Britain's courts and judges, according to a Home Office study published last week.

The authoritative British Crime Survey (BCS) says that politicians have been wrong to 'play to the gallery' by basing their criminal justice policies during the 1990s on jailing more and more people to feed the public's mistaken appetite for tougher punishments.

'These findings should warn politicians away from populist responses to crime. They show that a populist 'tougher law' policy will not actually achieve much in the long run. It will not actually change public perceptions,' said the report's editor, Professor Michael Hough.

The key findings from the BCS's Attitudes to Punishment study show that, despite more than five years of 'prison works' and 'get tough' policies from the former Conservative Secretary, Michael Howard, there still exists a crisis of public confidence in the courts that needs tackling urgently.

The study discloses for the first time the scale of public ignorance on this issue. It says the majority of the public is wrong to believe that recorded crime is rising dramatically, that a large proportion of crime is violent, and that judges are handing out sentences which are far too lenient.

The BCS study, based on interviews with more than 16,000 people in 1996, shows that the public seriously underestimates just how serious the courts are when it comes to sending people to prison. It says this ignorance of crime and sentencing is contributing to widespread public cynicism about law and order. The problem is compounded by the absence of easily accessible figures showing the 'going rate' for any particular crime.

'Those who were most likely to underestimate the courts' use of imprisonment had lower educational attainment than others, were likely to be older and were more likely to read the tabloid newspapers,' says the survey. 'Women were more likely than men to underestimate the proportion of convicted rapists sent to prison, and over-occupies more likely to be magistrates.'

than others to underestimate the use of imprisonment for burglary.

The study blames the media for such a large public misunderstanding of what goes on in the courts. 'News values mitigate against balanced coverage,' it says. 'Erratic court sentences make news; sensible ones do not. As a result large parts of the population are exposed to a steady stream of misleading stories about sentencing incompetence.'

However, the authors of the survey say part of the solution lies in the hands of the judges and the rest of the criminal justice system.

They say that the public has a very jaundiced view of judges, with more than a third believing they do a poor job. This compares with much higher levels of confidence in the police, the prison service and magistrates.

Law and order: facts and fiction

● Recorded crime has fallen by 8 per cent in recent years. Some 75 per cent of people think it is going up.

● Only 6 per cent of crimes are violent or sexual. Most people think violent crime accounts for more than one-third of all crimes.

● The murder rate is going down. There were 681 homicides in 1996 — 10 per cent fewer than in 1995.

● Convicted criminals are increasingly likely to be jailed: 79,100 were imprisoned in 1996, compared with 58,400 in 1993.

● Serious offenders are jailed. More than 90 per cent of convicted robbers and 97 per cent of rapists go to prison.

● Young children are no more likely to be killed by a stranger than they were in the past. Seven children a year have been killed over the past 20 years.

● Women are three times less likely than men to be attacked by a stranger.

● The elderly are at less risk from violent crime than the young. Under-25s are 13 times more likely to be mugged than pensioners.

Therapists 'plant false memories in patients'

Rory Carroll

PSYCHIATRISTS have launched a fierce attack on colleagues who use bogus techniques to plant false memories of sexual abuse in patients, according to an unpublished report which was delayed for more than a year because therapists feared it would criticise them.

A copy obtained by the Guardian shows that the inquiry, commissioned by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, has concluded that any memory recovered through hypnosis, dream interpretation or regression therapy is almost certainly false.

It blames these 'dangerous and powerful tools for persuasion' for spawning hundreds of false accusations against parents, destroying families and undermining the credibility of genuine abuse victims.

Mistaken diagnoses have made patients more likely to feel suicidal and to engage in self-mutilation.

Sydney Brandon, chairman of the report's working party, said the General Medical Council should respond to complaints from patients by striking off psychiatrists who persist in using the techniques.

The report's key finding is that people do not have memories of abuse. On the contrary their problem is that they cannot forget.

'Despite widespread clinical and popular belief that memories can be

'blocked out' by the mind, no empirical evidence exists to support either repression or dissociation,' the report says.

False memories tend to date the abuse from an earlier age than genuine cases, often when the person was an infant.

A book regarded as seminal by some mental health professionals, *The Courage to Heal*, is branded 'irresponsible' for attributing almost all adult psychiatric problems to forgotten sexual abuse.

'Therapists are also criticised for using all-embracing symptom checklists — such as headaches, eczema, pronounitis and wearing baggy clothes — that exclude few people.'

Entitled *Recovered Memories of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Implications for Clinical Practice*, the original report was submitted to the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the summer of 1996.

Its hard-hitting findings appalled some Royal College members, who lobbied for it to be shelved. A compromise was agreed whereby watered-down guidelines were issued last October, but the report itself would no longer be published under the imprimatur of the College.

Dr R E Kendall, the College president, confirmed that a revised version will appear as an article in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* in April.

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Suharto's regime is on the line

THE PRESIDENT of the world's most powerful nation phones the president of East Asia's second most populous state and tells him to get things straightened out — and do it fast. This could be the most significant telephone call of the year. Ex-general Suharto has enjoyed decades of immense indulgence, yet times have now changed. Indonesia was an essential player in the Asian cold war and Suharto brought it over to the Western side. He shrugged off complaints, from the bloodbath of 1968 which lubricated his rise to power, via more bloodshed in East Timor, to growing unhappiness in his blatant nepotism which mocked the requirements of global economics. He tried it on again after the first International Monetary Fund bail-out last October, backtracking over promises of reform. But this time the Indonesian is not alone.

The bustling bubble of the Asian "economic miracle" has given a wider dimension to Indonesia's crisis. President Clinton's spokesman explained that the urgent telephone call was needed because of "the importance of Indonesia to the region and to the US". In the past that was a reason for talking softly with Suharto now it requires the reverse. Other limping Asian tigers are consenting to radical surgery to allow Jakarta to go its own way while bringing down the whole shaky structure. Indonesia presents one of the biggest questions marks of the new year. Will the pent-up internal pressure for political change finally combine with external pressures to break the Suharto mould?

The question will not be postponed for long. Amnuzog as it may seem, Suharto has been planning, at the age of 76, to seek re-election in March for a seventh consecutive term of presidential office. But last week's panic has created a new mood in which this agenda can no longer be taken for granted. Megawati Sukarnoputri (daughter of President Soekarno) has been named as a candidate. Last weekend Suharto's office seemed to some observers to put out feelers for a deal, with speculation that he might go to Jakarta with assurances that his grandchildren and daughters would be exempt from prosecution.

Suharto has made a habit of outlasting the sceptics, not least because of the economic boom which, however unsound its foundations, has led to rapid economic growth and a significant though uneven rise in living standards. This time there are new danger signals. The panic buying of staples such as rice is one pointer. There is already a widespread perception that should be relatively unaffected by devolution of the rupiah, yet supermarket shelves were stripped and the government has been forced to control prices and arrange for exceptional imports. Another sign is the mounting anxiety of the Chinese business class. The tactical alliance Suharto formed with the most wealthy Chinese, even though he occasionally condoned anti-Chinese rhetoric, could quickly come under pressure if the Chinese market retreats. The memory of the 1968 witch-hunt against the left which was extended against the Chinese minority, is still vivid. Every family has heard tales of houses floating in the rivers. It would not take much to turn the Chinese into a scapegoat.

There is, however, still a strong possibility that Suharto will hang on regardless. The dominance of his corrupt oligarchy, argue the sceptics, means that it will not go quietly. Even if he is forced to step down, his wishes will be opposed by cronies and relatives who will defend to the end their privileges. The IMF has targeted a structure of cartels, tariffs and subsidies that is essential to their well-being. But as Keith Richards of the Washington Post reports, "In almost every sector with heavy government control or where a monopoly is granted, there is a Suharto offspring or a closely connected friend of the first family".

Unless Suharto goes of his own free will, only two forces can push him out. One is a determination within the armed forces to do to him what he did to others in 1965-66. There have been statements from former generals that they are ready to do but little evidence so far of strong support among serving officers. A younger, more critical generation is emerging, yet it lacks a strong alternative candidate. The second force could be a groundswell of popular anger. It is hard to see a groundswell of anger within the majority Muslim community. Here too there is a lack of a clear challenging force. The two main organisations, of almost equal strength and representing nearly 60 million of the population, find it hard to co-

operate. Amien Rais of the Muhammadiyah has called for unity and put himself forward as a presidential candidate, and could rally significant support. But he faces suspicion from Abdurrahman Wahid, heading the Nahdlatul Ulama, who fears, with some reason, that united action on a large scale might provoke the armed forces to rally around Suharto or set up their own junta. Suharto's marginalisation of these popular forces may still prove his biggest mistake. The question then is not when he goes, but whether he does so voluntarily or only after his country has been plunged into new disaster. Western leaders proffering advice by telephone should leave no doubt. Indonesia cannot afford more Suhartoism — neither can Asia and perhaps the world. It is time — more than time — for him to go.

A much-needed start in Algeria

ALGERIA has reached a critical mass of tragedy. There is a sense that the outside world is compelled to pay attention. The new European Union initiative is a much-needed start. And the Algerian regime itself has begun to realise that failure to meet the needs of its people will mean the end of its rule. The international community should act. How the international community should act is much more difficult to decide, but act it must.

The EU could have resolved to act a year ago, when there was also a dramatic escalation of violence during Ramadan. But a European Union initiative is a much-needed start. And the Algerian regime itself has begun to realise that failure to meet the needs of its people will mean the end of its rule. The international community should act. How the international community should act is much more difficult to decide, but act it must.

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The question is how to translate intentions into specific, particularly when initiatives may be unacceptable to the government. There is a clear need for direct aid for the victims and their families if NGOs can be found with sufficient brave volunteers to provide it on the spot. The regime appears willing to accept a United Nations report on extrajudicial killings, as urged by the UN Human Rights High Commissioner, Mary Robinson, last month. It has also agreed to let the EU send an advisory mission to explore ways of stopping the bloodshed — a mission that remarkably has been applauded by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

There are some steps, but they are unlikely to displace the obscurity that surrounds these massacres. New claims of government involvement have been levelled, which it is in the interests of the Algerian government to see properly examined. Until this is resolved, no attempt to tackle the underlying political causes will be successful. The suspicion that forces within the government prefer to encourage a perpetuation of the violence rather than seek accommodation with the more moderate Islamists can only encourage further escalation.

The EU's concern should be calmly, but strongly, expressed. France's willingness to support the German initiative, now taken up by Britain as EU member, is a useful signal so long as it is not undercut later by contradictory statements from Paris. United States concern is useful but needs to be conveyed with more vigour. The US state department has argued laboriously that oil and gas supplies are at stake. But it is not necessary to be in our interests. On the contrary, the threat to consider them may have more effect than mere exhortations on the Algerian government to "do more to protect its citizens". It should be doing more — but that is part of the problem.

The real truth about paedophiles — and us

Decca Aitkenhead

IT'S NOT easy these days to adopt a position as offensive as that which is tempted to force you to see it to yourself. Professors have been allowed to teach students racist theories, homophobic views, though perhaps thought unfortunate, are not unacceptable. But it came as no surprise that a British television documentary broadcast on Channel 4 last week provided considerable condemnation. It was, said one pressure group, "morally indefensible" to provide a "platform" for the interviewees. The programme was called *The Devil Among Us*. The interviewees were paedophiles.

Most people who watched it will have found what the men had to say deeply troubling. One believed that "For a child, the ultimate sexual threat would be to play naked and be photographed or videoed... It does the child an awful lot of good." Another, in his 50s, now no reason why an eight-year-old boy might not want to have sex with him after all, he reasoned, he had a "kind personality". A convicted sex offender affected to see no reasonable objection to his running "safe houses" for "vulnerable" children.

It is the case of paedophiles that the report on Mark Trotter, a paedophile allowed to continue working with children in an inner London borough, despite repeated complaints, the TV documentary was genuinely shocking. The case for banning it, however, was thin. There seems very little reason to fear that the watching public would be so easily misled.

We have exhausted the repertoire of people considered legitimate targets' — a phrase which has been heard to the paedophiles on the telly, turned to each other, and said, "You must admit they've got a point." A less persuasive collection of dysfunctional casualties would be hard to imagine. And viewers who share their sexual desires will already have engaged in their own elaborate process of self-justification — or downloaded it from the like-minded off the Internet.

In contrast, the programme makes a point of the fact that in order to tackle paedophilia, we must first understand the psychology behind it — seemed far enough. But the other psychology we seldom if ever examine is that of the public's response to paedophiles. I have friends who are friends with muggers, will share a joke with a crack dealer, and do drink with men who get drunk and cut up their girlfriends. Their take on parenting is frankly negligent.

But mention paedophiles to them, and they under the bed hunting for baseball bats, thundering the language of moral outrage. There is no mystery in why they find the idea of men wanting to have sex with children abhorrent. It is, however, worth wondering how paedophiles alone have come to haunt our communal imagination and motivate such a polarised response.

There are some obvious and unproblematic explanations. We know more about the prevalence of paedophilia, to the extent that we have been told that they remain a

menace for life. Alarming uses of the Internet are well reported, and newspapers have done their bit to expose paedophile rings. Parents who do cover their children have a reputation, even 30 years old, are — in this context — understandably afraid.

But what motivates Tony Sheppard, the ex-soldier in the documentary who received a prison sentence for a quasi-military campaign of violence and intimidation against a local paedophile? Had he not been caught, he and his friends had planned to kidnap their target and take him to a forest, where he'd be "taught a lesson". They'd planned to "kill him to a tree". The paedophile's life was also a "legitimate target", he was allowing his son to live with him. He Shepherd said he had "many views" about the subject, but seemed quite obvious that what he really had strong views about was the possibility of his own family falling apart.

"We've exhausted the repertoire of people we can consider legitimate targets," observed cultural historian Richard Vinen. "There used to be Jews and homosexuals, but what else have left? We've even lost our communists. When we've even lost our Berlin Wall, down with the disaster for paedophiles. They're the ones left to hate. If paedophiles didn't exist, society would probably be a much more pleasant place to live."

But if you ask people about the violent way they would deal with paedophiles, they tell you to look at the figures. Child abuse is everywhere. Real child abuse is everywhere. Real child abuse is everywhere. Real child abuse is everywhere.

There's a sense that the watching public would be so easily misled. We have exhausted the repertoire of people considered legitimate targets' — a phrase which has been heard to the paedophiles on the telly, turned to each other, and said, "You must admit they've got a point." A less persuasive collection of dysfunctional casualties would be hard to imagine. And viewers who share their sexual desires will already have engaged in their own elaborate process of self-justification — or downloaded it from the like-minded off the Internet.

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Le Monde

France's disaffected youth vent their anger

Danielle Rouard tests the mood of young jobless people in Strasbourg

FOUR youngsters are sitting on a bench in Strasbourg's Hautepierre district. "How can we tell you're a reporter?" the club-lest one says with a mocking smile. I show my press card. "Is it true it'd be better than in Neuho?" asks the eldest boy. Neuho is another name for the area — on the outskirts of Strasbourg — where the police don't dare go any more. Their faces light up. "It's different in Hautepierre, where the riot police and anti-riot brigades have been bugging us since November. Some days we get up to six identity checks."

"Thirty cars were burnt in Hautepierre. The weekend of the four, who is wearing a baseball cap back to front, nudges the eldest up. "It was really serious, wasn't it? All when on New Year's Eve the place was as bright as daylight." He remembers proudly. "I'd be great if it was like that every day."

Three men hang their heads and say nothing. The youngest says: "No need to break a window. You just kick in the door, set fire to the car and scarpers." Some people living in these small blocks of flats were taken in for questioning, but they were released.

In the previous few months there had been signs when the occasional car was torched. From November on, however, tension grew. "We told adults round here we were going to burn the whole lot on New Year's Eve," he said. On New Year's Eve and the days that followed, groups of young people did indeed set fire to a few cars — but "not to hurt anybody's cars."

Their victims, often people who had not finished paying for their cars, included a few neighbours "who in the past called in the cops just to get us into trouble". But most

of the time "we did it for no particular reason, just for kicks". Some fathers elude that "kids over 18 eggs on the youngsters, who don't face the risk of going to jail". The version of events is contested by teenagers who have attained their majority. "They're just plain stupid at 12, 14 or 16. They want to prove they're grown up. Our elder brothers used to beat us up if we did something silly. But what's the point of hitting the lot? They live as though they were on telly — not in real life but in a film."

Ten years ago there was a flare-up of violence in Hautepierre. Then things calmed down. Young people had a good time for 10 years (82) they could go dancing at raves organised by local youngsters with advice from professionals, announced a dance hall called Café Moulage was opened there from Hautepierre's Cultural Centre, but it had to close

down last April. "A gang of 15 guys got on the wrong side of the café managers and started going in with out paying and making a fuss because there wasn't enough rap. They used anything as an excuse. Since then there has been no music and no meeting place except the street."

"Many young people observe Ramadan," says an 18-year-old boy, a second-generation North African who is a student at a technical school. "I may have got into trouble. But I'm not a delinquent. We were given out of it, it calmed down." On New Year's Eve he went dancing at the Big Party 20, an event that was organised at great expense by the local authorities.

The poster for the event, designed by local youngsters with advice from professionals, announced there would be techno, funk, rap and R&B — justification perhaps for

the 80 francs entrance fee paid by the 3,000 who turned up. "A lot of people couldn't afford it," says a 21-year-old secretary of Algerian origin. "I took me 10 months of sheer sweat to find a job. Companies don't like Arabs much. At a meeting I can understand the way the youngsters behaved — they're stone broke. So they celebrated New Year's Eve in their own way."

That evening she was with friends when she heard a loud explosion. "It was the gym — that was something I really couldn't understand." Many local youths used to work out at the gym. People have come up with all sorts of explanations for the bomb attack. Some see it as the work of Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right National Front, others blame Muslim fundamentalists.

Two-thirds of Hautepierre's population of 15,000 are of North African

origin. Walls near the gym were covered with inconspicuously written slogans such as "Algeria against France in 1962; it'll do it again" and "Should France exist?" Youngsters say: "What we have here is Hautepierre in a modern Islam, and we have no desire to go to Algeria, which we don't know anyway — we're French." They think the slogans were written by isolated angry provocateurs. They miss their gym: "That bomb was damned stupid."

You get the same kind of answer from leaders of the Muslim community in Neuho. They criticise an atmosphere of growing permissiveness and the intervention of social workers, "who stop us beating the hell out of a kid who's done something stupid. The family has to remain strong."

Since the beginning of the year several people have been arrested in Neuho, including a young Gypsy who allegedly set fire to a dozen cars. His clan lives on the Avenir street, a street which is usually quiet. There are bullet marks on several walls, including those of a nursery school that opened in 1995.

A former company director is sickened by it all. "I voted for Mitterrand in 1981. I now vote for Le Pen. I'm fed up with the constant hypocrisy of the city council. The young people who hurt cars are doomed. I don't like to say so, but the only solution is to crush them."

In the heart of the moment, Strasbourg magistrates have ordered a crack down hard. Two custodians of Alsatian origin were given two-year prison sentences, and an 18-year-old girl who broke a car window so two minors could try — unsuccessfully — to set fire to the vehicle got eight months. She had never been in trouble before. Her accomplices will not appear before a juvenile court.

Of the 31 young people arrested by police since December 31 only four come from immigrant families, which shows that the situation in Hautepierre is not as black-and-white as some would have us believe. (January 8)

Unanswered questions on Israel's left

COMMENT
Patrice Claude

A GUESSING game doing the rounds in Tel Aviv goes something like this: Who is "rather against" the creation of an independent Palestinian state? In the favour of a continuing Israeli presence on the Syrian Golan Heights? In the favour of the " Oslo 2"? Backed a last-minute tightrope walk of the law in Israel beyond allowing Israel to annex the Arab East Jerusalem, is "opposed" to the breaking up of Jewish settlements, does not envisage giving more than half the occupied territories to a government of national unity with the ruling Likud and all the parties of the right?

Here's a hint: he's an ambitious and self-promoting politician with a very high opinion of himself who is looking for a recent rebellion within his own ranks. Everyone knows the name: Ehud Barak, leader of the opposition Labour party.

Barak, a leader writer on the liberal magazine *The Jerusalem*

Report regrets that, three years after bursting on to the political scene, the ex-general who sees himself as Yitzhak Rabin's heir has not made one interesting speech or come up with one original idea.

That depressing verdict is almost unanimously shared, even by Palestinians. Sources close to Yasser Arafat hint sadly that "nothing can be expected from Barak". Labour party members, 57 per cent of whom elected him, leader seven months ago, seem disappointed, even distraught. The party's left wing and "peace now" activists feel they have been duped.

Last month, 800 delegates from around the country attended the national Labour convention in Tel Aviv to listen to their new leader and debate his policies. Barak, by then convinced that his former subordinate in the special commando — Lieutenant Benjamin ("Gibi") Netanyahu would not survive as prime minister till the end of the term in 2000, wanted to put his party on an election footing in case an early poll was called this year.

When he selected the congress hall, the applause that greeted him was no more than polite. But when

Shimon Peres, who has never won a single general election, walked in he received a standing ovation.

What is going on in the Labour camp? "A post-electoral identity crisis," suggests Shimon Ben-Ami, one of its brightest up-and-coming stars. "Maybe, but combined with a leadership crisis," says Hagai Meron, leader of the party's left wing.

Last June Barak refused to allow Peres to take up the honorary post of party president because he rightly feared that at 74 the "grand old man" would lead an internal opposition faction. Peres now seems more energetic and combative than ever. That only makes his successor look all the more colourless.

At the convention Peres leaped out at Barak. The Syrian president, Hafez al-Assad, "sincerely wants peace", Peres claimed, saying that peace would never come if Israel "restored only part of the Golan Heights". More surprising was his assertion that "the Palestinians need a state". Publicly wrongheaded, Barak, the so-called brilliant strategist, sent the next few days trying to distance himself from Peres's words. But Peres had hit a nerve. That day less than 15 per cent of those present voted in favour



Barak seen as a Bibi clone

of Barak's proposal to create the post of director-general of the party. Worse, his plan to make national service compulsory for Palestinian youths, who are never called up, and for the ultra-Orthodox "young men in black", who almost always get out of it, never even came to a vote. Several prominent party members said that what they wanted was a policy genuinely different from Likud's, rather than "gimmicks".

Barak is convinced that the Oslo accord and the Islamist bomb attacks that preceded it followed Rabin's killing shook Israeli politics to its foundations and caused the electronic to lurch to the right. So he embarked on a vigorous repositioning of his party towards

the centre. This has shocked many Labour supporters. He has gone from being "Bibi-compatible", as many on the left described him six months ago, to being widely seen as a "Bibi clone".

Gone is the alliance with the pro-peace, non-ideological Meretz, which in its manifesto had described the emergence of an independent Palestinian state as "desirable". Barak has begun poaching on the right's turf ground, while carefully avoiding any ideological debate. He has mocked Netanyahu's "incompetence" and "opportunism", but has never indicated a political attack on the government's decisions. He has never said a word about the way Israel occupationally rules — "for security reasons" — over territories won by force, while cars are inhabited by 2.5 million Arabs.

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JAN 19 1995

Canadian Indians Receive Apology

Howard Schneider in Toronto

THE CANADIAN government last week apologized to the country's Indian, Inuit and other aboriginal people for decades of mistreatment, offering an emotional statement for policies that tried to stamp out native culture and confined Indian children in other abusive government-run schools.

Following a drum and dance ceremony, and clucking a ceremonial feather, Jane Stewart, Canada's minister of Indian affairs and northern development, read an official "Statement of Reconciliation" that acknowledged the damage done to native populations beginning with the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century and running through modern efforts to suppress native religion and language.

The statement dealt in broad terms with an array of offenses, including the hanging of Louis Riel, leader of the French-Indian Metis people, who was executed by federal officials in 1885 for his role in a Saskatchewan uprising.

Stewart said she hoped the statement inaugurates a new relationship between Canada and its original residents, and pledged \$250 million for a "healing fund" to specifically help those who suffered physical and mental abuse at the government-run schools. The schools were not closed until the 1970s, and left a legacy of emotional scars among generations of Indians who remember them as a place where they were secluded from their families, forbidden from speaking their language, and in the worst cases physically and sexually assaulted.

"As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices," Stewart said, reading from a statement inscribed on a scroll that was presented to representatives of Canada's five major Indian organizations.

"The government of Canada today formally expresses to all aboriginal people in Canada our pro-

found regret for past actions of the federal government which have contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together.

Along with the healing fund, Stewart said the government will begin working with Indian leaders to develop health, counseling and economic development programs to address unemployment, teen suicide and other chronic social problems plaguing many native communities. What she dubbed a "spiritual poverty" linked to the government's suppressive policies.

For a variety of historic, economic and demographic reasons, native affairs have remained among Canada's most pressing domestic concerns and occupy a far higher profile than in the United States. Indians form a larger portion of the population than in the United States, and though the percentage is still small, they are the fastest-growing segment of Canadian society. In cities like Winnipeg, for example, Indians are a very visible minority.

Many provinces, most notably British Columbia, have notably tried negotiations with Indian groups over basic questions of land title and access to resources that were not settled in the colonial era. The courts here have on several occasions recognized aboriginal rights to harvest the resources contained in their traditional lands — limiting what was wanted to be provincial jurisdiction over forests and fishing grounds, for example.

The statement of reconciliation, therefore, is not only an ethical expression of sorrow but also an acknowledgment that Canada still needs to resolve complicated questions of land title and the wealth of the land between cultures.

After decades of legal battles, time-consuming talks and sometimes violent protest by natives as they pushed traditional land claims, the statement is a step in the right direction, said Phil Fontaine, grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations, a coalition of Canada's dozens of distinct native bands.



Traffic stalls in Montreal last week. Rain and ice cut power to millions of people in Canada and New England.

"For the first time in history, this government has accepted that Canada cannot achieve its full potential without the success of its native people, who form about 5 percent of the population but occupy much larger in Canada's history and self-image, Fontaine said.

"This is and always has been our land, before the phantoms of an constructed pyramid, or China's emperor built the Great Wall," the grand chief said. "Our knowledge of the world, our obligation to the creator, makes us unique among Canadians."

"This celebrates the beginning of a new era," Fontaine added. He said he expects serious efforts to provide native communities with access to the land, forest and other resources they need to sustain and govern themselves, and to protect their culture.

News in Brief

TERRY L. Nichols was spared the death penalty last week when federal jurors were unable to agree on whether the Oklahoma City bombing conspirator should pay for the crime with his life.

U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch dismissed the panel, which deliberated for 13 hours over two days before sentencing Nichols to life in prison. Nichols was charged with responsibility for sentencing Nichols to death for his role in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, in which 168 people were killed. The judge said, however, sentence Nichols to a maximum of life in prison unless the possibility of release. He said for recommendations from the prosecution and defense by February 1 and 15, respectively.

After the jury left the courtroom, Nichols' lawyers shook his hand, hugged him and patted him on the back. Nichols registered little reaction. Clearly distraught victims' families, supporters of affirmative action, and other groups were in the courtroom. Nichols' family said he was not involved in the bombing. Nichols' family said he was not involved in the bombing.

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If the Army has done so well in racial integration, why has it not succeeded as well with gender integration? The comparison of race and gender integration has become a standard practice for advocates of bridge-building. It is a participation in the armed forces, especially in combat units.

There are indeed similarities between race and gender equality in the Army. Both blacks and women are a minority of Army personnel (27 percent and 15 percent, respectively). Blacks served in segregated units until the early 1950s. And the Korean War, women served in all-female units in World War II and continued to do so until the mid-1970s. And, as we start with the most obvious: Between the races, physiological differences are not an issue, but between the sexes they are. All the talk of how modern warfare is high-tech and push-button is off the mark. Ground combat in any setting involves the most physically demanding endurance imaginable. Even in the Persian Gulf War, where the media highlighted the efficacy of stand-off weapons, large numbers of men were involved in physically grueling armored assaults. And, out to be overlooked, much of the work involved in logistics often requires sheer muscle power as well.

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Battleground of Confusion

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are black). Rare is the enlisted woman who expresses a desire to enter the combat area. But directly to the point, surveys show that only 2 percent of enlisted women believe sexual harassment would decrease if the combat areas were opened to women. In fact, 61 percent believe harassment would increase. The rest thought it would not make much difference one way or the other.

But if the proponents of putting women into combat units are at odds with enlisted women over the subject of sexual harassment, they are absolutely on target in another matter: Without women in the combat area, there will never be a proportionate number of female generals. So, do we want more female generals or less sexual harassment? Just acknowledging this trade-off should help clear the air.

Even the staunchest traditionalists must admit that women bring special talents to the Army. As reported by a presidential commission, women soldiers tend to have higher aptitude scores, better work attitudes and fewer disciplinary problems than the men. The presence of women soldiers also was an important — if yet unrecognized — factor in the Army's exemplary performance in recent peacekeeping missions. It is now a matter of record that the behavior of American soldiers toward the local populace in Somalia was exonerated compared with that of other armies, including Western ones. This welcome outcome was in no small part due to the Americans being the only mixed-gender force in Somalia. Female soldiers, that is, display a compassion found less frequently among men. Yet the very qualities that enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions can be a hindrance in combat, where the worst instincts in soldiers must be aroused.

The main argument for the integration of women in the armed forces must be the same as it was for blacks: Does it make for a more effective military? The bottom line is that blacks and whites are essentially interchangeable soldiers. But when physical differences and privacy concerns matter — and they do — men and women are not.

Charles Moskos is professor of sociology at Northwestern University. His most recent book (with John Sibley Butler) is *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration in the Army* (Westview Press).

Choosing Between Bad and Mad

OPINION
Eileen Goodman

IT IS no wonder that we stumble so often when we're forced to decide whether someone is crazy (also mad). After all, we barely speak the same language.

The medical world talks about mental illness. But the lay world talks about legal insanity. The public wonders whether some defendant is mad as a hatter. The judge only has to determine if a defendant is competent enough to stand trial.

This is how it goes now in the case of Theodore Kaczynski, who appears to be both certifiably nuts and legally competent.

What anyone really surprised when the mathematician-turned-terrorist, the accused Unabomber, interrupted the trial before it even began to read something he had written, something "very important." Was anyone truly surprised that he apparently protested in the judge's

chambers against being represented by lawyers who would try to portray him as mentally unstable? Kaczynski did what he does best. He disrupted the system. If he is crazy, a former prosecutor told me, he should be in the courtroom, then he is crazy like a fox. But this man spoke as if Kaczynski could not be both sick and smart, delusional and deliberate. A psychotic fox.

This is at the heart of the trial of a man who worked in his journals that society would see him as a "sick" rather than a political philosopher. A man who has learned to use a psychiatrist, who has been found "competent" to stand trial according to that low legal standard and so is permitted to direct his own defense.

What does society do about a man who writes with clarity that the technophiles are taking us on an utterly reckless ride into the future? Does society want to let lawyers that he believes stifle control people and place electrodes

in their brains. A man who is accused of deliberately planning and bombing a plane that killed three people and maimed 29. But says he was controlled by an all-powerful organization he could not resist.

Ever since John Hinckley shot Ronald Reagan and was sent to a mental hospital, insanity has become a hard defense to muster. As Michael Perlman of New York Law School says, "There is no question that jurors consistently reject the insanity defense in cases of people who were severely mentally ill and didn't know what they were doing."

It is raised only 1 percent of the time in federal courts. The defense is rare and successful one-quarter percent, and even then, almost always when both sides agree that the defendant is out of his mind. Today, Perlman says, "Society wants to try just about everyone."

The law holds people responsible for their actions while medicine tries to help those who are ill through no fault of their own. These two latter sciences meet at the juncture where

evil confronts illness. In a lock-up era, we have come to believe that insanity is a loophole for evil, not a diagnosis for disease.

But the bizarre part of this story is that to declare Kaczynski evil and so for the death penalty, we have to accept Kaczynski's own view of reality.

We have to agree that the world he constructed over 20 years in a cabin in Montana is not the delusion of a paranoid schizophrenic, but the rational view of a political ideologue. Sending letter bombs was the rational act of an anti-technology terrorist, not a madman controlled by some omnipotent force.

Is not what Kaczynski insists he is sane, but here is the clincher: The law agrees. Having found him "competent," at least for now, he has won a degree of autonomy and power.

Indeed, as Northwestern University law professor Rose Zuckerman says wondrously, "He's dragged us down Alice's hole. It's as if he were forcing us to go into a world as crazy as his." This past winter has been running the show.

SETTLEMENT discussions have resumed in the sexual harassment case against President Clinton, but with Paula Jones suing, not with the Clinton administration, no out-of-court resolution appears imminent.

As Clinton prepares to go on trial, the case against Jones appears to be a long shot. Jones' lawyers for Jones approached his legal team about finding an agreement that would avoid a month's closed-door trial scheduled for May, according to sources familiar with the talks.

In addition to the apology widely demanded, Jones' lawyers have sent a settlement proposal in the form of a \$2 million, a figure first reported last Sunday by CBS. Jones' attorneys said the \$2 million is a "gesture of goodwill" from Jones, which originally sought what was first filed her lawsuit in June. Jones' attorneys said the \$2 million is a "gesture of goodwill" from Jones, which originally sought what was first filed her lawsuit in June.

'2000 Bug' Hits Pocketbook Plastic

Daily Chandrasekaran

WASHINGTON'S Market Day story, purveyors of trifles, Kleenex tissues, fragrances and other trendy products, has gotten pretty picky. It has a credit card that customers can pay with a credit card. Your credit card has a credit card. Your credit card has a credit card. Your credit card has a credit card.

Many computer systems use a two-digit dating system that assumes 1 and 9 are the first two digits of the year. Without specialized reprogramming, those computers will think the year is 2000 — or 00 — actually in 1900, a glitch that could cause many systems to go haywire. At Market Day, for instance, if a card expires in "00" it is wiped through the register's magnetic stripe reader. "It tells us it's expired," lamented Chris Cullinan, the store's owner.

That year 2000 issue has long been cited as a problem that

won't strike with intensity until two years from now. And when it does, specialists had expected the biggest effect will be on large systems, such as those that process payroll checks or store government records.

But the credit card glitch, experts say, shows that the date problem won't solely be a niggling issue for computer specialists trying to rewrite programs. Average people who don't use computers and those who do, including business owners, could be affected — and well before January 1, 2000.

"This has created a lot of headaches for merchants," said Cathy Hilde, vice president of Information Technology at the National Retail Federation, a trade association based in Washington. "Not everyone has been able to fix their system,

and that means problems for consumers."

Credit card companies contend that only a small percentage of stores cannot handle the new cards.

Visa International and MasterCard International in October started allowing their merchants to use a "year 2000" code to indicate the expiration date of the credit card, to eliminate the credit card glitch. But the code expires in 2000 and beyond. Both companies said they spent five years and millions of dollars to ensure that merchants could handle the new cards, replacing old card-reading terminals and conducting system-wide checks around the globe.

Visa estimates that 99 percent of the 14 million locations worldwide that accept the card can handle the year 2000 expiration dates, said Scott J. Harrison, who is handling date-conversion issues for the company.

"We've done everything you

can imagine," Harrison said. "We've mobilized the force of our merchant base. We've produced hundreds of thousands of test cards. We've required merchant banks to report on the compliance status of merchants."

Harrison said Visa has from 300,000 to 400,000 year 2000 cards in circulation that are generating about 3 million transactions a month.

But not every credit card company thinks merchants are fully ready. American Express Co. is still limiting cards to 1999 expiration dates and doesn't plan to release year 2000 ones until later this year. "Not all merchants are year 2000 compliant yet," an American Express spokeswoman said.

Although stores are trying to quickly fix their systems, retailers continue to be plagued by the problem because banks are issuing hundreds of thousands of the new cards each month.

John Sibley Butler

**ALWAYS OUTNUMBERED,
ALWAYS OUTGUNNED**
By Walter Mosley
Norton. 206 pp. \$23

Concrete Route to the Heart of America

DIVIDED HIGHWAYS
Building the Interstate Highways,
Transforming American Life
By Tom Lewis
Viking, 354 pp. \$27.95

Now — more than four decades after the initiation of a project that, in our present, small-government era, would find inconceivably ambitious — I have found a rhetorical ally in Skidmore College English profes-

ate to the Heart of America

Midwesterner is Dwight D. Eisenhower, who as part of a military convoy in 1919 aced 62 days to travel over mostly unpaved roads from Washington across to San Francisco. Thanks to the Interstate

time is just as sound boring. It is not. For Mosley invents mundane situations with mortal peril and concomitant opportunities for growth. The first story begins with the killing of a rooster by an angry black boy named Darryll; this forces Fortlow to confront his own youthful rage. In the second, Fortlow is tempted to kill again—but this time with the aid of a woman who is not only a hooker but also a drug addict. Fortlow is terrorized by a drug dealer. In another, he wanders into a situation that mirrors his original crime. From tale to tale the problems grow in complexity, and the tension is as tight as in any thriller as Fortlow seeks — in the narrow space society affords him — nonviolent solutions that will also preserve his dignity.

Mosley has thought hard about the criminality in the black community. He has also thought about

Wright's portrayal of Biggs, the parallels are abundant. But Mosley has made different — and arguably better — decisions. Wright limited himself to Biggs's point of view, which meant dark perceptions and an amoral consciousness. Mosley has enriched his descriptions with language and imagery beyond Fortlow's ken, and invested Fortlow with a wealth of detail. Biggs was inarticulate, Fortlow speaks with realistic simplicity and unsparring honesty: "A man like me shoulda been hung, gassed, and then electrocuted. But they didn't kill me because I was the best klu Kluxer rule-follavin' nigger. I killed my own people an' then let myself get caught. To my own people I was a good boy. The men who made these rules threw me a bone and let me live."

one cannot help but wish that Mosley had not only collected the details but reshaped them to remove the repetitious that are needed to them to stand alone. The passages that fill in Fortlow's background are repetitive, and their rendering is as annoyingly blocky. Some tales seem shoehorned into two small spots; plots move with little forward quickness, and the author awkwardly compressed, and complex material is not resolved too swiftly, neatly, or finally.

But one also cannot help but applaud not only what *Walt Mosley* has done but the risk he has run in doing it. A successful commercial novelist, he could have questioned himself with a greater certainty and again. Instead, he created the story of *Sorcerer Fortlow* and challenged his audience to read it... and weep.

Billions of Asia

hola Cuming-Bruce
angkok

The Southeast Asian financial crisis is threatening a new dimension in human misery as the vicissitudes of its battered Tiger economies planned to expel millions of foreign migrant workers. Thailand and Malaysia's aim to throw out at least 2.5 million labourers, and South Korea is likely to send out all its 270,000 guest workers. The forced repatriation will cause considerable hardship for some of the world's poorest countries, as well as threatening widespread political instability.

It represents a double blow, halting the flow of foreign earnings on which poor countries such as India, Burma and Bangladesh have

Thailand will force tens of thousands of workers across the border into Burma, one of the world's most backward economies, crippled by decades of mismanagement. Returnees will include many from ethnic minorities who fled bloody campaigns by the ruling military junta.

The repercussions of the Malaysian move could prove even more drastic. Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, is already struggling to cope with up to 2 million people whom business leaders and military chiefs say have lost their jobs.

Start. "This crisis is still in its early stage," said a political analyst, Dewi Fortuna Anwar.

Last year Indonesia was forced to take back thousands of workers from Saudi Arabia who had overstayed their permits. The much bigger repatriations that its plan for Malaysia goes ahead with its loans would come as Indonesia grapples with the impact of severe drought as well as the regional economic crisis. The crisis is also a major, and potentially destabilising ingredient into what is becoming an increasingly volatile political equation. Worries are mounting that economic hardship may ignite violent protests, amid deepening uncertainty over the future of 76-year-old President Suharto.

cerned worrying trends: a willingness to fight back against police and a loss of credibility on the part of authorities.

A Thai minister announced last week that the government intended to repatriate between 300,000 and 500,000 foreign labourers every year for the next three years. The government believes that such a measure will free work for the 2 million Thais expected to be made jobless by the country's giddy slide from boom to bust.

Authorities have only a rough estimate of the number of foreigners who have found jobs in Thailand, mostly in construction and factories. Most are from Thailand's neighbours, but some are from as far away as the United States. The problem is finding and jailing employers who defy expulsion notices.

On a collision course with disaster

The West is treating the Asian crisis as if the Titanic had never sunk, writes **Larry Elliot**

HOLLYWOOD's latest stab at portraying the fateful maiden voyage of the Titanic opens in Britain next week. But with Western capitalism bearing down on the iceberg of Depression, the question is, who needs a film when you can have the real thing?

Warning bells are ringing, particularly in Washington. Bill Clinton has intervened directly in the crisis in Indonesia and is likely to intervene

The one country in the early 1930s not to default was the United States. The overvalued dollar led to significant deflation then, and there are parallels with today's imbroglione. The yen has weakened against the dollar, and currencies pegged to the dollar have bombed. European currencies have fallen since it became clear that monetary union was unlikely, because international capitalists fears the euro may be more of a Titanic II than the answer to low growth and unemployment.

Low interest rates and a depressing yen in Japan, together with capital flight from Europe, has led to money pouring into the US. The predictable result has been a rising dollar and booming shares. In the short term, the dollar may rise further, but the Dow Jones continues to flirt with a merry yawn towards 10,000. There will be seen as evidence that the crisis is over. It will not be.

China has so far not joined in the round of Asian devaluations, but may do so if the fall in its Asian neighbours' currencies threatens its exported growth. The huge drop in Hong Kong's Hang Seng index and the collapse of Persgine, Inc. and the Hong Kong bank, which was good news. Beijing has nerves of steel, but its patience is not infinite.

It is a fallacy to believe that the Asian and European economies can all export their way out of trouble on the back of depreciating currencies. It will lead to greater chaos as the world financial system collapses under the weight of competitive devaluations.

This is a grim scenario. But there is a silver lining for those who believe that the alternative to unfettered globalisation is root and branch reform, rather than the "inevitable" collapse of capitalism.

George Soros's recognition of the need for greater regulation of the international financial system shows

that even the biggest of the speculators can see an argument for proper curbs on financial systems, making the relationship between lenders and borrowers more egalitarian. Mr. Soros, himself the owner of a multinational insurance corporation, would force borrowers to come clean about their credit position but limit government loans.

Professor Kumbler Rafter, of the University of Vienna, has an alternative, that effectively allows debtors to govern themselves by seeking protection from creditors by taking American-style bankruptcy courses. ■

Timing comes in many guises. The first proposed by James Tobin may be an idea whose time has come. Chile, which has been operating a variant of a Tobin tax — it has a transaction tax and a requirement

that investors deposit 30 per cent of their funds with the central bank for one year — has so far escaped unscathed.

Finally, there may be a long overdue reprise of the global institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund. The IMF deserves some sympathy for its predicament of late, because it would have been damned had it not bailed out Thailand and South Korea and is now damned because it did. It is unrealistic to expect it to transmogrify overnight, but a debate must now begin on what the IMF is for — to help the people of Asia, or Wall Street and

The American multinational—the Joseph Stiglitz chief economist at the World Bank, cautioned last week that the plight of ordinary people in Asia should not be forgotten during the IMF's efforts to bring the wave of punishing economies into recession. There is always a tendency to think that once the IMF has endorsed a financial system and put it on a structural adjustment programme, then everything will be fine. But that is not the case. There are more people living in poverty in Latin America than in 1980.

The rage of the 'Tiananmen' was just that there were too few liberals but that most of the 1,500 deaths were among the poor and the grunts stuck below in steerage.

Something to bear in mind, perhaps in the weeks and months to come,

FINANCE 19

In Brief

THE scale of the task of rebuilding Japan's battered economy was highlighted when the finance ministry disclosed that the nation's banks were saddled with \$560 billion in loans, three times higher than admitted.

BUSINESS is booming in the global black economy, according to a report in the Economist, which estimates that this year \$3 trillion worth of business — equivalent to the combined output of Spain and Germany — will escape the taxman's watchful eye.

MICROSOFT'S rival in the Internet browser wars, Netscape Communications, warned of a fourth quarter loss of up to \$89 million that will put the company back in the red for 1997. Meanwhile Apple Computer predicted it would report profit of more than \$45 million for its first quarter in 1998.

B RITISH company directors are ignoring plans from the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to curtail boardroom greed, awarding themselves pay rises four times higher than the increases they give their employees, says the Trade Union Congress.

NATIONAL SAVINGS Interest rates in the UK were cut for the first time in two years, and renewed hopes that house prices may at last have peaked.

WH Smith agreed to sell its Waterstone's bookselling chain to the music group EMI

CINVEN, the venture capital firm, won control of IPC Magazines from Reed Elsevier in a \$1.3 billion management buyout, one of the largest such deals in British corporate history.

MERSEYSIDE hopes to win significant new foreign investment after Ford's decision to make its new "baby" Jaguar at the Halewood plant. Meanwhile, Toyota, Japan's largest car manufacturer, is to invest \$240 million to expand its engine plant Decade in North Wales.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Starting rates January 15	Starting rates January 1
Australia	2,500.9-2,501.1	2,549.6-2,550.0
Canada	20.99-20.95	20.95-20.90
Belgium	60.70-60.60	61.38-61.41
Denmark	2,297.6-2,298.6	2,331-2,332
France	11.18-11.19	11.24-11.31
Germany	9.95-9.84	9.99-9.97
Hong Kong	2,932.9-2,948	2,978.2-2,982.9
Italy	7.77-7.78	7.86-7.87
Japan	8,697-8,700	8,654-8,657
Netherlands	212.26-212.9	210.28-210.38
New Zealand	3.3111-3.3146	3.3005-3.3038
Norway	2,830.5-2,840	2,874.45-2,875
Portugal	12.05-12.07	12.16-12.18
Spain	300.65-300.95	304.99-305.05
Sweden	249.00-249.35	251.00-250.95
Switzerland	2.77-2.78	2.79-2.80
U.K.	2,089.2-2,090.2	2,140-2,141
USA	1,614.4-1,615.1	1,603.5-1,604
ECU	1,487.11-1,489	1,505-1,506

FTSE100 Share Index down 183.7 at 5098.8. FTSE
Index down 22.1 at 4762.8. Gold down 26.75 at 111

هَذَا مِنْ الْقَوْلِ

20 ACADEMIC POSTS & COURSES

Controversy is raging in Russia over radical proposals to reform the education system. Pieta Monks reports

Moscow's march against time

THE convulsions now shaking Russia are mirrored in a multitude of proposed reforms of the educational system. They include suggestions that the school-leaving age be lowered to 15 for all but the brightest children, that student loans be abolished and fees implemented for students in higher education.

There are widespread fears among those engaged in education at all levels in Russia that these changes and others will be imposed upon them in the forthcoming educational reform plan, the draft report of which will be published in the spring. Controversy rages even at ministerial level where there is disagreement between the minister of education, Vladimir Kiselev, a traditionalist, and his deputy, Alexander Arsenov, who wants to cut down the number of state universities from 800 to 300, and to expand the private sector.

The debate being conducted all over Russia in schools, universities and in the media, focuses primarily on how far privatisation of the education system will go. One of the proposals suggests giving schools half the money they need to pay their staff. The school would have to find the remaining 50 per cent itself.

At the same time, a prize-winning mathematics teacher, an

hardly hide his disgust at these proposals, and speaks for the vast majority of his colleagues when he says: "All my life I have worked for the sake of my pupils — and now to teach only those who can pay me!" He is also vehemently opposed to the suggestion that most children should leave school at 15.

Other proposals floated include raising the school-leaving age to 18, mainly to stop boys dodging the army. At the moment young men can bypass the army (whose entry age is 18) by leaving school at 17 and immediately entering university, after which they are no longer eligible for conscription.

The two-year army stint is seen as a new economic and social answer to unemployed, feeless school-leavers (for two years at least). And the theory is that after the army the boys make better students at university. However, the army is in the process of reform and in future may no longer demand universal conscription.

In universities it is proposed that grants be abolished and tuition fees introduced. The argument goes that students pay for their own education they appreciate it more. However, this view was rejected at last year's conference of university vice-chancellors in Moscow, safeguarding the Future of Education in Russia,



A government proposal to raise the school-leaving age aims to prevent young men from dodging conscription. PHOTO: MARTIN ROEMERS

where delegates voted overwhelmingly to oppose any introduction of fees and the abolition of grants. Malsha Bashurayeva is the deputy dean of the department of sociology at Moscow State University, and has been particularly vocal in his opposition to any attempt at introducing fees. He explained the particular

difficulty that rural students would face if grants were abolished and fees introduced: "Muscovites might have the know-how to get sponsorship, but students from small villages would have no chance whatsoever. Quite simply, it would mean that many able students could no longer go to university."

There is also a proposal to abolish the individual exams that let students of higher education choose to introduce national testing. There is a certain mark will guide the applicant to go to any university they want, as to most European countries.

Adopting a Western model and rejecting the traditional Russian system is a deeply unpopular idea. Although schools have had a foretaste of this. Last August all schools in Moscow received a directive to introduce a new subject — how to be a good citizen — into the classroom. There were no text books and no guidelines on how to teach it. But from September 1 it had to be taught in all Moscow schools for 10 hours a week. The time to be taken from subjects such as mathematics and literature. And there are further proposals to exclude "difficult" classics from the timetable, such as Pushkin's masterpiece, Eugene Onegin, and Gogol's 19th century satire, Dead Souls.

Times are hard in Russia, and money is short. Highly qualified professionals are paid appallingly and many of them are now working as non-specialists in money-making ventures merely to survive.

At the moment there is a shortage of teachers particularly in the field of mathematics. Schools and universities are in a vital need of capital repairs. Standards in schools are falling, applicants to universities are prepared. Workers in schools at higher education institutes are proposed reforms will do little anything to solve these problems. The fear is that they will be implemented, nevertheless.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 18 1995

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 18 1995

ASSOCIATION OF COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITIES

UNIVERSITY	POST	REF. NO.
Africa and the Caribbean	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	W48333
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Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	Research Development & Administration	W48335
Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	W48336
Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	Enrolment Planning & Student Welfare	W48337
Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration & Finance)	W48338
Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	PAR/SLAL Chemistry	W48339
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Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	PAR/SLAL Structural Engineering	W48341
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Durban-Westville (S. Africa)	SLA Parasitology	W48347
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University of London	L American Studies	W48363
University of London	SLA Forest Management	W48364
University of London	SLA (part-time) Health Economics	W48365
United Kingdom	Deputy Director, Commonwealth	W48366
ACU	Higher Education Management Service (CHEMS)	W48367
St John's College, Oxford	Visiting SRP 1999-2000	W48368
St John's College, Oxford	Abbreviations: P - Professor; PL - Principal Lecturer; AP - Associate Professor; SRP - Senior Research Fellow; SL - Senior Lecturer; AL - Assistant Lecturer.	W48369

APPOINTMENTS & COURSES 21

The Save the Children Fund (SCF) is the UK's largest international voluntary children's agency. We have been working in the Middle East and the Caribbean for many years for the rights and the welfare of children, assisting communities in the region to achieve lasting benefits. In both regions we are working on regional programming initiatives and strategies to ensure shared learning and wider impact of our work.

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PROGRAMME DIRECTOR - CARIBBEAN

Based in Kingston, Jamaica **£22,145 p.a.**

In the Caribbean too, SCF's work focuses on education work, the environment and children's participation in environmental projects, including tree planting schemes in Haiti, protecting the marine environment in Cuba and youth groups in Jamaica's marginalised urban areas running clean-up campaigns. Other work includes HIV/AIDS prevention with Cuban youth and disability work, including training workshops in Haiti on community based rehabilitation and integrating disabled children into mainstream education. Advocacy training with young people is now taking place across the region.

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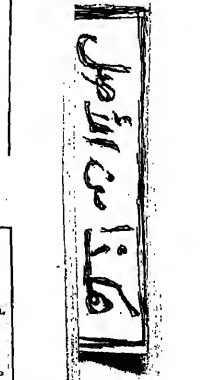
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Ominous cry of the raven

Paul Evans

THE year begins its slow spiral out of the hill. Landing down from the top of Muddock hill I hear the raven before I see it — calling from the herking darkness of its journey up from the old quarry floor. It creaks slowly, reaching long, blue-black wings into the northwesterly, a wind propelling great banks of mannacloud cloud up over the hills of south Shropshire. Sunlight catches plumes of elean from Bullwain station in the Severn. Gorge to the east and Allent sugar beet factory to the west. A dark cloud looms over the Clee Hills. The alpine plies northwards into the murky distance of the plain.

As the raven's carousel widens, it spins air from under its wings by folding them and flapping sideways like a fighter-plane into the wind to tumble a few feet and then, catching the updrafting current it has set for itself, starts outward and upward again. With each "grace" the raven speaks for the year: its death and rebirth; its bad luck and good omens; its storms, hidden weapons, buried treasure...

The English word raven, from *Corvus corax*, the largest and most enigmatic of the crows, is closest to the Danish name *kavn* and came with settlers who brought their mythologies from Scandinavia. Elsewhere in Europe the raven has more ornate names: the *krak* of the Netherlands, *krak* of Estonia, *krak* of Latvia and *krak* of Slovenia suggest the bird's rough voice. Such a voice resonates through ancient cultures around the world. Ravens have long been associated with divination from North America to China. The corvidomancers — those who foretell the future by interpreting the signs of crows and their tribe — knew that each

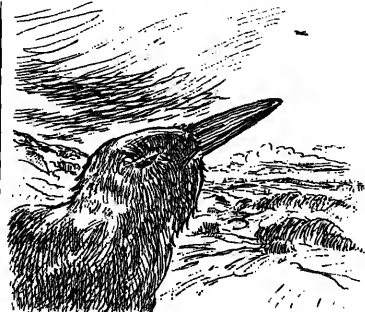


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARSON

wonderful rapping croak bark of the raven is ominous.

Numerous Eddas believed wolves could track carrion by following ravens. In the *Heimskringla*, boys who drank from a raven's skull were said to be able to find dead bodies. In Ireland, where the raven is called *feith dubh*, there are extremely detailed accounts of raven divination where the position of sightings and the notes of each call foretell very particular events. In British Celtic mythology the raven is sacred to Bran, the god-king whose oracular head he buried on the site now occupied by the Tower of London. Ravens are still kept at the Tower and legend has it that when they go the kingdom will fall.

We may have lost the skills of the corvidomancers, but the presence of these enigmatic birds, which can symbolise both solar wisdom and the powers of darkness, continue to enthrall. This raven's death-didings and

songs of wild joy answer to no one. Why should it? The sky is full of omens of its own: it speaks of rain that will wash, storms that will crash, gales that will smash through trees. If ravens predict storms, this one has certainly been accurate. This year began with some of the fiercest gales to have hit Britain since 1987. With blustering winds, which killed four people and cut the power supply to thousands of homes, came torrential rain and flooded rivers. As the raven calls and wheels, slips and tumbles, this midnight spirit of the winter sun is joined by its mate from the north.

Together they dance higher, and as the circle widens they vanish into the Wehkin woods — the silver-purple of birches; the smoke-green of oaks; and the fox-pelt patches of bracken. The ravens are gone and the new year is with us. Whatever we may make of the omens of birds or stormy skies, we remain none the wiser.

Chess Leonard Barden

RUSSIA'S monopoly of the World Senior Championship for over 40 years was finally broken when Janis Klovans of Latvia won 9/11 from a record entry of more than 200 players at Bad Wildbad, Germany. Klovans automatically became a grandmaster at the age of 62, the oldest person to qualify for the title, when he scored in the final round while the defending champion Mark Taimanov and two other rivals with superior de-bunks settled for early draws. Britain's John Littlewood totalled 7½ and shared eleventh place in this strong company.

Correct strategy for a decisive game is often debated. Should you aim for a riskless all-out edge, or stake up tension and complications in an unbalanced position? Paradoxically, the former approach seems to work better against an opponent who only wants a draw. The famous games Laaker v Capablanca 1914 and Alekhine v Fine 1937 were two cases where eminent GMs requiring half a point as Black played too passively. Klovans' Austrian opponent in the final round of the World Senior could also have become champion by winning, so the Latvian knew that his opponent could not afford so solid defence. Klovans gambled a pawn to achieve active play, and got the chance to enter the record books in style by a double rook sacrifice.

H Baumgartner v J Klovans 1 Nf3 d5 2 d3 Nf6 3 Bg2 e6 4 0-0 Be7 5 d4 0-0 6 c4 dxc4 7 Ne5 Ne6? A remarkable pawn sacrifice which allows the exchange of two pairs of minor pieces and seems to give Black only nebulous compensation. But while, in the heat of over-the-board play, runs into a series of nagging problems. 8 Bxc6! The alternative 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 Bxc6 Rb8 10 Bg2 Bb7 11 Nc3

12 Kf2 13 Kf2 c5 14 dxc5 Bxc5 15 Bxc5 16 Nxc5 17 Nc6 18 Nc7 19 Qc2 20 Qc2 21 Qc2 22 Qc2 23 Qc2 24 Qc2 25 Qc2 26 Qc2 27 Qc2 28 Qc2 29 Qc2 30 Qc2 31 Qc2 32 Qc2 33 Qc2 34 Qc2 35 Qc2 36 Qc2 37 Qc2 38 Qc2 39 Qc2 40 Qc2 41 Qc2 42 Qc2 43 Qc2 44 Qc2 45 Qc2 46 Qc2 47 Qc2 48 Qc2 49 Qc2 50 Qc2 51 Qc2 52 Qc2 53 Qc2 54 Qc2 55 Qc2 56 Qc2 57 Qc2 58 Qc2 59 Qc2 60 Qc2 61 Qc2 62 Qc2 63 Qc2 64 Qc2 65 Qc2 66 Qc2 67 Qc2 68 Qc2 69 Qc2 70 Qc2 71 Qc2 72 Qc2 73 Qc2 74 Qc2 75 Qc2 76 Qc2 77 Qc2 78 Qc2 79 Qc2 80 Qc2 81 Qc2 82 Qc2 83 Qc2 84 Qc2 85 Qc2 86 Qc2 87 Qc2 88 Qc2 89 Qc2 90 Qc2 91 Qc2 92 Qc2 93 Qc2 94 Qc2 95 Qc2 96 Qc2 97 Qc2 98 Qc2 99 Qc2 100 Qc2 101 Qc2 102 Qc2 103 Qc2 104 Qc2 105 Qc2 106 Qc2 107 Qc2 108 Qc2 109 Qc2 110 Qc2 111 Qc2 112 Qc2 113 Qc2 114 Qc2 115 Qc2 116 Qc2 117 Qc2 118 Qc2 119 Qc2 120 Qc2 121 Qc2 122 Qc2 123 Qc2 124 Qc2 125 Qc2 126 Qc2 127 Qc2 128 Qc2 129 Qc2 130 Qc2 131 Qc2 132 Qc2 133 Qc2 134 Qc2 135 Qc2 136 Qc2 137 Qc2 138 Qc2 139 Qc2 140 Qc2 141 Qc2 142 Qc2 143 Qc2 144 Qc2 145 Qc2 146 Qc2 147 Qc2 148 Qc2 149 Qc2 150 Qc2 151 Qc2 152 Qc2 153 Qc2 154 Qc2 155 Qc2 156 Qc2 157 Qc2 158 Qc2 159 Qc2 160 Qc2 161 Qc2 162 Qc2 163 Qc2 164 Qc2 165 Qc2 166 Qc2 167 Qc2 168 Qc2 169 Qc2 170 Qc2 171 Qc2 172 Qc2 173 Qc2 174 Qc2 175 Qc2 176 Qc2 177 Qc2 178 Qc2 179 Qc2 180 Qc2 181 Qc2 182 Qc2 183 Qc2 184 Qc2 185 Qc2 186 Qc2 187 Qc2 188 Qc2 189 Qc2 190 Qc2 191 Qc2 192 Qc2 193 Qc2 194 Qc2 195 Qc2 196 Qc2 197 Qc2 198 Qc2 199 Qc2 200 Qc2 201 Qc2 202 Qc2 203 Qc2 204 Qc2 205 Qc2 206 Qc2 207 Qc2 208 Qc2 209 Qc2 210 Qc2 211 Qc2 212 Qc2 213 Qc2 214 Qc2 215 Qc2 216 Qc2 217 Qc2 218 Qc2 219 Qc2 220 Qc2 221 Qc2 222 Qc2 223 Qc2 224 Qc2 225 Qc2 226 Qc2 227 Qc2 228 Qc2 229 Qc2 230 Qc2 231 Qc2 232 Qc2 233 Qc2 234 Qc2 235 Qc2 236 Qc2 237 Qc2 238 Qc2 239 Qc2 240 Qc2 241 Qc2 242 Qc2 243 Qc2 244 Qc2 245 Qc2 246 Qc2 247 Qc2 248 Qc2 249 Qc2 250 Qc2 251 Qc2 252 Qc2 253 Qc2 254 Qc2 255 Qc2 256 Qc2 257 Qc2 258 Qc2 259 Qc2 260 Qc2 261 Qc2 262 Qc2 263 Qc2 264 Qc2 265 Qc2 266 Qc2 267 Qc2 268 Qc2 269 Qc2 270 Qc2 271 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Shaping the harmonies of our time

Sir Michael Tippett

FOR a long time, Sir Michael Tippett, who died aged 93, languished under the shadow of Benjamin Britten. Britten, eight years his junior, was a musical prodigy, lauded in his teens, widely appreciated after the success of his opera *Peter Grimes* in 1934, and remaining prolific and popular up to his death in 1976. By contrast, Tippett, a late developer, was a slow, deliberate composer who won acceptance gradually. International fame came only in his late 60s.

What distinguished the rest of his career was a prolonged Indian summer. For Tippett continued to write major new pieces until almost 30, breaking new ground with each one, blessed with physical, creative and intellectual vigour. He became an almost legendary figure on the musical scene, his oratorio, *A Child of Our Time* (1939-41) — a moving assertion of humanitarianism in an era of catastrophe — acquired eventually the status of an icon.

Throughout his long life, Tippett ran against the grain of received British opinion. He early concluded that music and the arts were fundamentally international, and rejected the insularism of the then prevalent mode of nationalist folk-music-inspired composition championed by Vaughan Williams.

Tippett was a pluralist: a humanist who eschewed dogma; a socialist and pacifist, a Jungian who felt art was basically collective and archetypal; a visionary with a capacity to blend the most disparate ingredients — Beethoven, pre-classical counterpoint, jazz and gamelan music — within a single work, be it his exuberant First Piano Sonata (1930) or his bitter-sweet Triple Concerto (1979). Thus, his largest-scale compositions — notably his five operas and three major choral works — were all attempts at creative synthesis at different points in his career. Prefiguring these summative pieces, or developing out of them, were Tippett's four symphonies, five string quartets, five piano sonatas, concertos, songs and numerous shorter instrumental and chamber works. Taken as a whole, however, this oeuvre had a consistent and distinctively modern spirit.

Tippett wrote little that could be called "experimental". His friend and mentor, T.S. Eliot, said that for him, as for a poet, "the words come last". Likewise, with Tippett the notes came last, following upon a lengthy period of gestation and structural planning. His sense of the line and shape of a piece was such that in his maturity he invariably wrote from beginning to end in sequence, sending each completed section to his publishers, confident that there would be no need for significant revisions.

Tippett stood aside from trends and fashions. As a student, he was overpowered by the humanistic idealism of Beethoven's music; and he took structural models from Beethoven's compositions throughout his career. A second strand in Tippett's musical make-up derived from his early discovery of polyphonic music, especially Elizabethan madrigals.

Although unsympathetic to neo-classicism, Tippett was a brilliant player of all kinds of vernacular music, often taking it to enrich his own writing. The folk songs of his early (unpublished) ballad operas were later put to good use in his mature works.



Seer and dreamer... Tippett combined social concern with a Jungian mysticism

use in his tongue-in-cheek Suite for the Birthright of Prince Charles (1985) in his fifth opera, *New Year* (1985-88). He embraced the aesthetics and rhythms of rap and reggae. His early encounter with jazz and blues, albeit cut, convinced him that music retained a universal expressive potential, even if edged with irony.

Tippett was born in London and grew up in Suffolk. His intellectual life was nurtured in early childhood by his highly articulate, well-read parents, who found incomprehensible his determination to become a composer. Having persuaded them to support him at the Royal College of Music, however, Tippett came to London in the summer of 1923. But he lacked the fluency and versatility of his fellow students and his teachers, who included Malcolm Sargent and Adrian Boult, often despaired.

Tippett got his degree at the second attempt and then left London for the country to live peace to compose. This became a rule thereafter, despite the public appearances and jet-setting of later years. As a student, Tippett accepted his homosexual leanings, but few of his close relationships survived his ruthless creative obsession. One of the longest lasting, with painter Karl Hawker, ended with a cohabited separation and the latter's suicide.

Tippett's personal turmoil coincided with the rise of Nazism and Stalinism. Following Jung, he interpreted the violence of the period and the war that followed as projections of one society's "shadow" on to another's view he held to, later, in the context of the cold war. Tippett identified strongly with those made scapegoats by intolerance and self-righteousness. Thus, the inspiration underlying his oratorio, *A Child of Our Time*, which had begun as an opera about the Eastern Uprising in Ireland, but gelled as a protest against the 1938 Kristallnacht.

Aiming for directness and lucidity in *A Child of Our Time*, Tippett took Handel's Messiah and Beethoven's Ninth as his main models. Clinging to the emotional impact of the work at five key stages, he incorporated negro spirituals (replacing the Lutheran chorales Beethoven would have used). This provided a brilliant play helping to give the work great expressive breadth.

At its premiere in 1944, *A Child of Our Time* was understood primarily as a response to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. But its message — that music and the arts were fundamentally international, and rejected the insularism of the then prevalent mode of nationalist folk-music-inspired composition championed by Vaughan Williams.

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A talent to amuse

John Wells

JOHN WELLS, who has died from cancer at the age of 61, was an extraordinary character: a comedian, actor, musician, journalist, pseudo-diplomat and even, on occasions, novelist and dramatist.

I first encountered him at Oxford where he was appearing in Gordon Cross's musical version of an Italian Straw Hat. He was an extraordinary character: a comedian, actor, musician, journalist, pseudo-diplomat and even, on occasions, novelist and dramatist.

Wells was a hard man to pin down: he seemed to pop up everywhere. But on two occasions he turned the Private Eye back on himself. In the first, he wrote a hilarious parody of the *Private Eye* magazine, which was published in the *Private Eye* magazine.

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Politics falls into Brechtian generation gap

THEATRE
Dennis Staunton

THIS year is the centenary of the birth of Bertolt Brecht, a fact that will escape the notice of few. He was an extraordinary character: a comedian, actor, musician, journalist, pseudo-diplomat and even, on occasions, novelist and dramatist.

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timber merchant, and Garga, an impoverished assistant in a bookshop.

Brecht began the later version of the play with an act of violence. He wanted to waste the time thinking about the motives behind the struggle but to judge the skill of the protagonists impartially.

Schall's production begins, instead with an urgent voice-over announcing the plot as if it were a crime thriller. When the curtain goes up, we appear to be in traditional Brecht territory, complete with the familiar, white half-curtain.

But this second curtain is drawn back to reveal an elaborate, revolving set, dominated by a fallen bronze giant, reminiscent both of Gulliver and of the hundreds of thousands of Lenin that now lie abandoned throughout Eastern Europe.

During the subsequent three and a half hours, actors chamber all over the giant, a car drives through the wall of a house, and the world's funniest Salvation Army band wanders in and out to punctuate the action with songs.

Dominique Horvitz is magnificent as Schlink, an outsider who engages in a struggle with Garga in order to become close to him. Goetz Schubert's Garga is a wide-eyed idealist who adapts swiftly to the role of the realist which is forced upon him.

But in choosing an early version of the play, Schall has sacrificed much of the political force which Brecht added later, when he made the element of class struggle clearer. Brecht aficionados will doubtless relish the opportunity to view this curiously on a large stage, but in view of the reactions the Brecht estate pieces on other directors, it is difficult to miss the irony of the playwright's granddaughter exhuming a text he rejected.

Michael Billington writes: Dennis Staunton's production of *The Good Hope*, the Nobel Prize-winning Italian playwright, brings out the best and worst in British companies — you get pungent force or slapdash pantomime. An ill-judged revival of his 1981 political comedy *Kluge*, *Trumpets and Raspberries*, by a young group called Juggling Friends,

falls heavily into the latter category and is unlikely to win Fo new friends. You could argue the play itself has dated. Its starting point was the kidnapping of politician Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades in 1978. Out of that Fo creates a farcical fantasy in which the boss of Fiat, Gianni Agnelli, is rescued from a blazing car by one of his own militant employees, Antonio Berrardi.

But when plastic surgeons get to work on the disfigured Agnelli, he is suddenly wearing Antonio's jacket, they facially reconstruct him on the lines of his activist assembly-line worker. The stage is thus set for a political comedy of errors.

THE PLAY obviously depends on topical circumstance. But it still has political relevance. Fo makes the point, quoting Marx, that "the laws of a state are written on its bank notes". But all they really prove in this instance is that the heads of giant multinationals enjoy a power that transcends that of mere prime ministers. In an age when politicians go on in hand to global media tycoons, Fo's point strikes me as grossly pertinent. And on the purely mechanical fringe on a night.

THE FACT that Law and Thompson are given in their usual dichotomy as the fact and the law, is his best publicity, and in the end they provide the strongest reason for seeing it. There's one extraordinary example of unusual clarity in saying something about the transaction between mothers and daughters. Elphinstone is wearing a fur coat. Frances takes it in her hands and rubs her mother's lined cheeks with remembered tenderness. "More, more," Elphinstone says, closing her eyes, as the fur falls away.

The film's problems concern its undistinguished look — compare and contrast Alan Roygan's equally frost-bound *The Sweet Hereafter* — and a sticky residue of electrical cliché, most obvious in the boys' longer speeches, which are simply unbelivable.

LYNNE Stopkewich's *Kluge*, which goes on national release after its debut at the London Film Festival, is a gentle, sensitive portrait of a girl who discovers her childhood that she is attracted to dead things — sparrows and hammers, to start with — before going to find sexual fulfillment with a human corpse.

THE LUMINOUS quality of the Canadian actress Molly Parker goes a long way to making Stopkewich's case, which is that some people can only achieve the transcendence of sex by oversteering what society in general believes to be the acceptable norms. Parker Outerbridge, as her fascinated boyfriend, and her Brazeno, the "creaky" undertaker who teaches her the rudiments of embalming, provide excellent support.

Stopkewich is careful about what she shows and skilful enough to make us feel sympathy, even something stronger, for the girl. But I can't get beyond the fact that whichever way you slice it, screwing dead people is wrong. And if it were me, I think I'd want to be asked first.

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A bloodless coup

THEATRE
Richard Williams

WHEN Wm. Wenders points to the change in the nature of violence in the mainstream cinema, he is stating the obvious. Hollywood films, the home of a gang of Mexican gardeners, and a movie set where Edward Hopper's famous *Nighthawks* is being brought to life, down to the lowest detail. The film's internal rhythms are complicated, but its unvarnished pace is seductive.

There are moments of satire, even self-satire, as in *Joe* (Kier's wicked parody of a black singer director "Why I do make films in Europe" — which gets a laugh from those who have followed Wenders' career). And there is a chequered affection in the appearance of the dying Samuel Fuller as Byrne's dad, and the use of Griffith Park, where Nicholas Ray, another of Wenders' father-figures, set much of *Rebel Without a Cause*.

The film's violence happens off-screen. In the old-fashioned way. Two minor characters, a pair of hitmen, have their heads blown off. We see them beforehand, in a comic argument about getting their job done. One of them is the wonderful Pruitt (Vincent), and we see them afterwards, as shrouded corpses. That's all neatly done.

There is also much of the film's themes. Someone once wrote an essay on how Wenders' vision of America was framed by the wilderness of a car. Wenders has changed, and now Wenders watches America from the seat of a helicopter, through the restless lens of a remote-control, surveillance camera. Time and again the camera creeps over the top of a hill to reveal the grid of, enigmatically, identical streets. "Quite a city," one man says to another, as they look down. "Nothing like it," the other replies. "If you could see it," the first man says. The hill is shrouded in fog.

On a winter day in a small town, a young man and a young woman are trying to work out the unresolvable tensions of their relationship. Outside, the

our suits an unsympathetic role, and Lind, who has the healthy volubility of the young Kim Basinger, makes a strong impression.

Two hours goes Wenders enough time to take us down various LA byways — to a stand-up poetry club, a film producer's mansion, the home of a gang of Mexican gardeners, and a movie set where Edward Hopper's famous *Nighthawks* is being brought to life, down to the lowest detail. The film's internal rhythms are complicated, but its unvarnished pace is seductive.

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falls heavily into the latter category and is unlikely to win Fo new friends. You could argue the play itself has dated. Its starting point was the kidnapping of politician Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades in 1978. Out of that Fo creates a farcical fantasy in which the boss of Fiat, Gianni Agnelli, is rescued from a blazing car by one of his own militant employees, Antonio Berrardi.

But when plastic surgeons get to work on the disfigured Agnelli, he is suddenly wearing Antonio's jacket, they facially reconstruct him on the lines of his activist assembly-line worker. The stage is thus set for a political comedy of errors.

THE PLAY obviously depends on topical circumstance. But it still has political relevance. Fo makes the point, quoting Marx, that "the laws of a state are written on its bank notes". But all they really prove in this instance is that the heads of giant multinationals enjoy a power that transcends that of mere prime ministers. In an age when politicians go on in hand to global media tycoons, Fo's point strikes me as grossly pertinent. And on the purely mechanical fringe on a night.

THE FACT that Law and Thompson are given in their usual dichotomy as the fact and the law, is his best publicity, and in the end they provide the strongest reason for seeing it. There's one extraordinary example of unusual clarity in saying something about the transaction between mothers and daughters. Elphinstone is wearing a fur coat. Frances takes it in her hands and rubs her mother's lined cheeks with remembered tenderness. "More, more," Elphinstone says, closing her eyes, as the fur falls away.

The film's problems concern its undistinguished look — compare and contrast Alan Roygan's equally frost-bound *The Sweet Hereafter* — and a sticky residue of electrical cliché, most obvious in the boys' longer speeches, which are simply unbelivable.

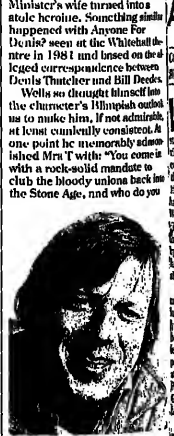
LYNNE Stopkewich's *Kluge*, which goes on national release after its debut at the London Film Festival, is a gentle, sensitive portrait of a girl who discovers her childhood that she is attracted to dead things — sparrows and hammers, to start with — before going to find sexual fulfillment with a human corpse.

THE LUMINOUS quality of the Canadian actress Molly Parker goes a long way to making Stopkewich's case, which is that some people can only achieve the transcendence of sex by oversteering what society in general believes to be the acceptable norms. Parker Outerbridge, as her fascinated boyfriend, and her Brazeno, the "creaky" undertaker who teaches her the rudiments of embalming, provide excellent support.

Stopkewich is careful about what she shows and skilful enough to make us feel sympathy, even something stronger, for the girl. But I can't get beyond the fact that whichever way you slice it, screwing dead people is wrong. And if it were me, I think I'd want to be asked first.

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Wells: mask of trumpet wit

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Two hours goes Wenders enough time to take us down various LA byways — to a stand-up poetry club, a film producer's mansion, the home of a gang of Mexican gardeners, and a movie set where Edward Hopper's famous *Nighthawks* is being brought to life, down to the lowest detail. The film's internal rhythms are complicated, but its unvarnished pace is seductive.

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